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**14. ABSTRACT**

This study is one component of the Special Operations Forces (SOF) Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project. The larger study consisted of 23 focus groups conducted across the SOF community and an issue-oriented web-based survey. This report informs the tactical, operational, and strategic use of interpreters by the SOF community. Results document SOF operators' heavy reliance on interpreters and provide suggestions from SOF operators and leaders regarding the best ways to mitigate the risks associated with this reliance. Fifty-seven percent of operators reported personal use and 70% of leaders reported their units using interpreters often or very often on inside area of responsibility (AOR) deployments, while 71% of operators reported personal use and 75% of leaders reported their units using interpreters often or very often on outside AOR deployments. This reliance stems from the lack of organic language proficiency; SOF operators reported that mission effectiveness would suffer if interpreters were not available. The current reality is interpreters will always be used to some extent, but the goal is to use them strategically and not out of necessity. This report provides information about the current use of interpreters and the advantages and disadvantages associated with using each type (e.g., Category I).

**15. SUBJECT TERMS**
interpreter, SOF, organic language capability, mission effectiveness, needs assessment

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# Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment: General Use of Interpreters

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides Special Operations Forces (SOF) leaders with information to inform the tactical, operational, and strategic use of interpreters.  This information can be used to examine and revise policies and everyday practice related to interpreter use, so that SOF operators' mission effectiveness can be improved.  Examining the current state of interpreter use in the SOF community can highlight important issues related to interpreter use, the effectiveness pre-deployment training related to interpreter use, and how vital interpreters are to completing various missions.  This report examines the use of interpreters broadly across all deployments.  For interpreter use linked to a specific mission (i.e., SOF operator's most recent deployment), please see *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011012).

Given the current desire for increased organic language capability and a reduced reliance on non-SOF interpreters (Olson, 2009), the SOF community must determine how to use interpreters more strategically in the future.  Current interpreter use is a necessity because SOF operators lack the required proficiency for missions.  This report examines the current use of interpreters in the SOF community across deployments.  Findings indicate that SOF operators rely heavily on interpreters for both inside and outside area of responsibility (AOR) missions.  Specifically, 57% of SOF operators and 70% of SOF leaders' units[1] reported using interpreters *often* or *very often* on inside AOR deployments, while 71% of SOF operators and 75% of SOF leaders' units reported using interpreters *often* or *very often* on outside AOR deployments. One focus group participant described his team's dependence on interpreters,

> *"…in Iraq, like I said, we had no one who spoke Arabic on our team; we had two interpreters and there were times when one would go on leave or come back and we'd have one interpreter and it's kind of like just stranded, dead in the water, we can't do all the things that we need to do or wanted to do because we didn't have the language capability to do it, and we didn't have the interpreters or the means to."*
>
> SOF Operator, 1st Special Forces Group (SFG)

Evidence suggests that the lack of organic language proficiency is the reason for the reliance.  Fifty-seven percent of SOF leaders indicated that their units were *dependent* or *very dependent* on interpreters during inside AOR deployments, while 66% of SOF leaders indicated their units were *dependent* or *very dependent* on interpreter during outside AOR deployments[2].  Even on inside AOR deployments where SOF operators often have language proficiency, more than 60% of SOF leaders indicated that interpreters were *important* or *very important* for their unit to carry out missions on inside and outside AOR deployments.

SOF operators suggested that mission effectiveness would suffer if interpreters were not available.  As expected only 18% of SOF operators indicated they would be *effective* or *very effective* on missions outside the AOR without the use of interpreters.  Even on inside AOR deployments where SOF operators

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[1] SOF leaders responded to the interpreter items from the perspective of their unit, not whether they themselves used interpreters.  For details on the items included in this report, please see Appendix B: Methodology.
[2] SOF operator responses are not included in this report.  The *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011012) report provides details on SOF operators' interpreter use on inside and outside AOR deployments.

often have language proficiency, only 39% of SOF operators felt they would be *effective* or *very effective* on missions inside the AOR without the use of interpreters. However, language proficiency played a critical role in determining mission effectiveness inside the AOR without interpreters. Specifically, SOF operators with higher levels of proficiency indicated they were significantly more effective without interpreters and used interpreters less often than SOF operators with lower proficiency levels. Thus, as proficiency increases, reliance on interpreters decreases, which is what USSOCOM wants and is an argument for organic capability. One focus group participant's experience highlights the importance of organic language proficiency,

> *"My last deployment, everybody on the team was 2+ or higher on their DLPT for language, and what we were able to do is, we were able to divide the country individually by region, analyzed our person to go by himself; they would brief the commander for that region on how to implement our work [ph] and better integrate ourselves with the host nation. Now if it weren't for the language capabilities for the entire team being fluent, it would be just one person, which is by what deploys that knows the language, trying to coordinate all that in a big country, dealing with multiple different areas and cultures in each different area of the country."*
>
> SOF Operator, 4th Military Information Support Group (MISG)

The current reality is that interpreters will always be used to some extent; thus, there are several important recommendations based on the findings in this report. All SOF operators should receive pre-deployment training on how to use interpreters. At present, only 42% of SOF operators reported receiving pre-deployment use of interpreter training, while 59% of SOF leaders reported that their units received training. This disconnect suggests that SOF leaders may not be preparing sufficient training resources, but believe that they are.

On the other hand, those who received pre-deployment use of interpreter training found it effective. This training can teach SOF operators how to appropriately use interpreters, build rapport with interpreters, and teach effective communication skills through the interpreter. One focus group participant illustrated the importance of this pre-deployment interpreter training,

> *"You have to be taught to work with them and train with them a little bit before you actually get out there and get yourself into a situation where they can be detrimental to whatever it is that you're trying to accomplish."*
>
> SOF Operator, 10th SFG

Across all deployments (i.e., inside and outside the AOR), 66% SOF operators reported using Category (CAT) I and CAT II/III interpreters *often* or *very often*, while 73% of SOF leaders reported that their units use CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters *often* or *vey often*. Therefore, SOF operators could benefit from training or guidance on the appropriate type of interpreter to use across various mission situations. This report presents information about the current use of CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters and the advantages and disadvantages associated with using each type. Some of the problems include a lack of *trustworthiness, competence,* and *availability.* CAT I interpreters were rated less trustworthy than CAT

II/III interpreters.  One SOF leader's experience highlights the trust problems associated with CAT I interpreters,

> *"Just like everything else, some were better than others. We didn't have any that were*
> *subversive, but several were just really sketchy guys that we did not trust."*
>
> SOF Leader, 19th SFG

Overall, SOF operators and leaders found both types of interpreters reasonably competent. The issue of availability was common to both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters, but was more often an issue with CAT II/III interpreters.  The majority of SOF operators (75%) and leaders (81%) reported at least sometimes encountering situations where not enough interpreters were available.

Two of the most frequent negative comment themes related to CAT I interpreters were trust/security concerns and the lack of a formal process to screen them.  However, SOF operators indicated some advantages to using CAT I interpreters, including a better awareness of the local area, stronger skills in the local language, and greater usefulness on combat or high-risk missions.  In contrast, CAT II/III interpreters were valued for their security clearance and the perceived trustworthiness associated with the clearance.  Thus, SOF operators and leaders saw them as a valuable asset for sensitive missions. Drawbacks associated with the use of CAT II/III interpreters were a lack of familiarity with the nuances of the local area, lack of knowledge of the local dialect, and an inability or unwillingness to accompany SOF operators on combat or high-risk missions.

> *"Usually CAT I interpreters are preferred over CAT II interpreters because of the*
> *difference in proficiency of the language.  However, certain jobs require CAT II*
> *interpreters due to the clearance of the individuals.  Quality CAT II interpreters are*
> *usually scarce."*
>
> SOF Leader, USSOCOM

In addition to training SOF operators on when to use each type of interpreter and how to use them effectively, the process used to screen interpreters should be examined.  Many SOF operators and leaders stressed the need for better and more consistent screening processes for selecting CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters.  One potential resource for this and additional information is the *Interpreter Ops: Multi-Service Reference Manual for Interpreter Operations* (2004).  The manual outlines topics including: 1) selecting and hiring interpreters, 2) how to orient and train interpreters, and 3) how to use interpreters for different interactions.

In addition to the *Interpreter Ops: Multi-Service Reference Manual for Interpreter Operations*, this report provides SOF operators' and leaders' suggestions for improving the interpreter screening process. Although there are currently no formal screening procedures for CAT I interpreters, there are several steps that can be taken by SOF operators on the ground.
- SOF operators should conduct informal background checks to screen out individuals who have a high probability of becoming a risk to operational security.

- CAT I interpreters should be screened for high levels of proficiency in both English and the local area language.
- When possible, SOF operators should not use CAT I interpreters whose personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.) could cause problems with the target audience.

*"CAT I interpreters are a powerful asset if they are evaluated, used and monitored properly.  You have to adjust your vocabulary based upon individual interpreters' understanding, which involves spot checks and explanations.  CAT I terps can provide invaluable insight into cultural dynamics and background on personalities.  However, it is imperative that you understand their individual quirks and capabilities to filter out their prejudices."*

SOF Leader, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG

Suggestions for selecting/screening CAT II/III interpreters include:
- Tactical elements conducting physically strenuous missions should be paired with healthy, physically fit CAT II/III interpreters, as mission effectiveness is reduced if an interpreter cannot accompany SOF operators on the more physically demanding missions.
- Hiring CAT II/III interpreters who understand the risky nature of SOF missions and are willing to assist SOF operators and leaders in all environments, including high-risk and/or combat missions.
- Screening CAT II/III interpreters for proficiency in the local area's predominant dialect.  If deficiencies are identified, they should receive local dialect pre-deployment training.

*"I recommend that there should be a more time spent on screening of LVL II/III...they should have no problem being understood in both the target language and English. I think that they need to attend formal training to be an TERP especially for any SOF units. I know this is not part of what your target questions are but we don't need to hire TERPS that cannot physically face the challenges that SOF units will endure. I do believe that we should have a pool of TERPS that are solid"*

SOF Operator, Deployed SO Unit or Element

Overall, this report documents a heavy reliance on interpreters and provides suggestions from SOF operators and leaders regarding the best ways to mitigate the risks associated with this reliance.  The SOF community must decide whether this level of reliance on interpreters is appropriate.  Given that interpreters will always be used to some extent, providing all SOF operators with pre-deployment training on when and how to use interpreters will ensure interpreters are used strategically on future missions.

This report is part of a larger project titled, *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) Project*.  See Appendix A of this report for additional details about the SOF LCNA Project.  For questions or more information about the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) and this project, please contact Mr.  Jack Donnelly ([john.donnelly@socom.mil](mailto:john.donnelly@socom.mil)).  For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr.  Eric A.  Surface ([esurface@swa-consulting.com](mailto:esurface@swa-consulting.com)) or Dr.  Reanna Poncheri Harman ([rpharman@swa-consulting.com](mailto:rpharman@swa-consulting.com)) with SWA Consulting Inc.

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**SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW**

*General Use of Interpreters* **Report Purpose**

This report describes the general use of interpreters by Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators and SOF leaders' perspectives of their units' use.  Specifically, this report documents interpreter use on both inside and outside area of responsibility (AOR) deployments, SOF operator's perceived effectiveness on missions if interpreters are not available, and any pre-deployment training that SOF operators receive on the correct usage of interpreters.  Additionally, issues concerning interpreter availability, trustworthiness, competence, and ability are discussed.  Information regarding mission-specific interpreter use[3] can be found in *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011012).

To enhance mission success, SOF operators receive foreign language training in one of the languages in their official or required AOR (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009).  However, there are times when SOF operators are deployed outside their AOR where they have no language proficiency, or are deployed inside their AOR but to a country where their language is not spoken (*Inside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report #2010011010; *Outside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report #2010011011).  There are also times when the mission task requires a higher level of language and cultural knowledge than deployed SOF operators have.  In these situations, it is necessary to find a way to communicate.  One solution is to outsource the requirement and to rely on interpreters.

There are three main types of interpreters used in the SOF community.  The most common types of interpreters used are Category (CAT) I, defined as a local hire or indigenous personnel not vetted or a U.S. citizen not vetted. The second types, CAT II/III interpreters, are U.S. citizens with secret or top secret clearances. Neither of these types of interpreters are U.S. military personnel.  Interpreters who receive military training, 09Ls, are defined as U.S. Army natives or heritage speakers of certain Middle-Eastern languages (e.g., Arabic).  Issues surrounding 09L use are further described in *09L Use in the SOF Community* (Technical Report #2010011014).

This report presents the specific details related to the current state of interpreter use amongst SOF operators and leaders.  This report's goal is to provide SOF leaders with information about the use of interpreters.  The report is divided into six sections with a number of supporting appendices.  Section II of this report provides information regarding frequency of interpreter use among SOF operators and leaders.  Section III of this report describes the extent to which SOF operators and leaders rely on interpreters.  Section IV addresses various problems associated with using interpreters. Section V provides a comparison of CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of using each type.  Finally, Section VI concludes the report by integrating main findings from each section and providing implications and recommendations for action.  Appendix A details the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project (LCNA Project)*.  Appendix B provides an overview of report methodology, including participants, measures, and analyses.  Appendices C and D present details regarding definitions and frequency of comment codes from open-ended questions, as well as definitions

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[3] Interpreter use in the *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* report is linked to a specific mission.  Interpreter use in the present report is general, across all missions.

and examples of survey comment themes.  Appendices E-H present tables and findings relevant to sections II-V.

## LCNA Project Purpose

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) commissioned the *2009 Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) Project* to gain insights on language and culture capability and issues across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).  The goal of this organizational-level needs assessment is to inform strategy and policy to ensure SOF personnel have the language and culture skills needed to conduct their missions effectively.  Data were collected between March and November 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including SOF operators and leaders.  Findings, gathered via focus groups and a web-based survey, are presented in a series of reports divided into three tiers.  The specific reports in each of these tiers were determined and contracted by the SOFLO.  *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*).  *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*) while including additional data and analysis on the topic.  One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project.  The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command].  Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project.

## Relationship of the *General Use of Interpreters Report* to the LCNA Project

*General Use of Interpreters* is a *Tier 1* report.  Findings from this report will be integrated with the following *Tier 1* reports: *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* and *09L Use in the SOF Community* in a *Tier II* report: *Use of Interpreters* (see Appendix A for the report structure).

**SECTION II: FREQUENCY OF INTERPRETER USE**

This section details the prevalence and frequency with which Special Operation Forces (SOF) operators use interpreters on inside and outside area of responsibility (AOR) deployments.

**Research Questions**

This section addresses the following questions:
- How prevalent is interpreter use within the SOF community?
- How frequently are interpreters used on inside AOR missions?
- How frequently are interpreters used on outside AOR missions?

**Main Findings**

Most SOF operators have used an interpreter on a recent mission. Furthermore, most SOF leaders reported that their units had used interpreters during their tenure with the unit. Most SOF operators reported frequent use of interpreters on both inside and outside AOR missions, as did SOF leaders (about their units). Among Army SOF (ARSOF) groups, Special Forces (SF) units used interpreters significantly more than Civil Affairs (CA) or Military Information Support Group (MISG) units. In general, SOF operators with higher levels of local area language proficiency used interpreters less often on inside AOR missions than SOF operators with lower levels of language proficiency.

**Detailed Findings**

*Overall interpreter use*

Most SOF operators (79%) reported using an interpreter on a mission within the past four years (Figure 1, p. 10). Similarly, 71% of SOF leaders reported that their units had used an interpreter on a mission during their tenure with these units (Figure 2, p. 10). However, interpreter use varied widely across SOF organizations for both SOF operators (Table 1, p. 11) and leaders (Table 2, p. 11). Specifically, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command (WARCOM) and Deployed Special Operations (SO) unit operators reported the greatest percentage of use, while Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) operators reported the least percentage of use. Additionally, SF operators reported significantly more use than CA operators. SF and Deployed SO unit leaders reported the greatest percentage of use, while AFSOC and JSOC leaders reported the least percentage of use. Consistent with operators, SF leaders indicated their units used interpreters significantly more than CA and MISG leaders' units.

There were also differences among U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) organizations for both SOF operators and leaders (Tables 3 and 4, p. 12, respectively). Across SOF operators and leaders, 4th MISG and 95th CA Bde reported less use of interpreters than SF units. This is expected given that CA and MISG operators often have higher language proficiency levels and may not always require the use of interpreters. Interestingly, 19th SFG and 20th SFG operators reported less interpreter use than

most other USASOC organizations.  One possible explanation is a lack of interpreter availability to these units during deployments.

*Figure 1.* SOF Operator Overall Interpreter Use
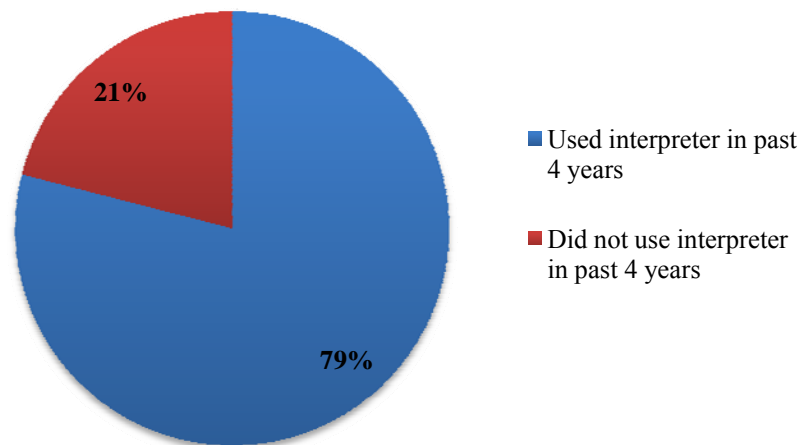


*Note.* $n = 1,377$

*Figure 2.* Unit Interpreter Use as Reported by SOF Leaders
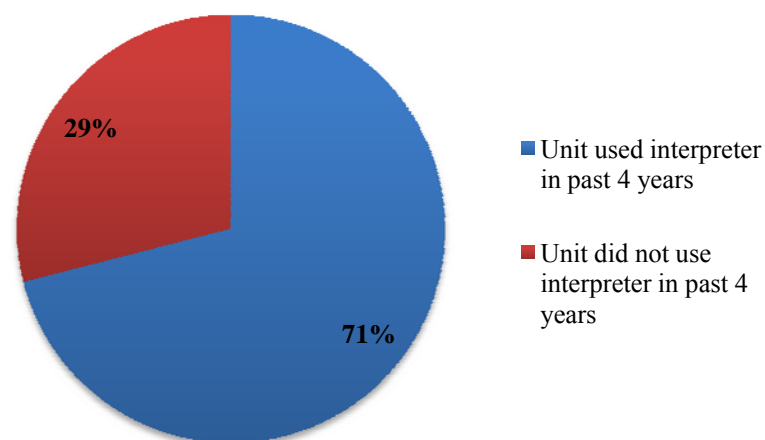


*Note.* $n = 957$

*Table 1.* SOF Operator Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and SOF Type

**Interpreter Use on a Mission - Past 4 Years**

| Group | *n* | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 151 | 81% | 19% |
| **AFSOC** | 28 | 32% | 68% |
| **MARSOC** | 25 | 60% | 40% |
| **WARCOM** | 9 | 100% | 0% |
| **USASOC** | 985 | 80% | 20% |
| *CA* | 209 | 69% | 31% |
| *MISG* | 184 | 76% | 24% |
| *SF* | 581 | 85% | 15% |
| **JSOC** | 4 | 50% | 50% |
| **TSOC** | 20 | 65% | 35% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 58 | 93% | 7% |
| **Other** | 84 | 76% | 24% |

*Note.* SF operators responded 'Yes' significantly more than CA operators ($\chi^2$ = 24.34, *df* = 1, *p* < 0.001). SF operators responded 'Yes' significantly more than MISG operators ($\chi^2$ = 8.80, *df* = 1, *p* < 0.05).

*Table 2.* SOF Leader Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and SOF Type

**Interpreter Use During Tenure**

| Group | *n* | Yes, can comment | Yes, cannot comment | No | Don't know/N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 136 | 26% | 28% | 17% | 29% |
| **AFSOC** | 11 | 18% | 64% | 0% | 18% |
| **MARSOC** | 28 | 18% | 43% | 14% | 25% |
| **WARCOM** | 12 | 25% | 33% | 17% | 25% |
| **USASOC** | 563 | 42% | 36% | 10% | 13% |
| *CA* | 72 | 29% | 47% | 8% | 15% |
| *MISG* | 110 | 24% | 45% | 9% | 23% |
| *SF* | 298 | 55% | 32% | 7% | 6% |
| **JSOC** | 8 | 13% | 62% | 13% | 13% |
| **TSOC** | 74 | 34% | 30% | 9% | 27% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 59 | 53% | 29% | 3% | 15% |
| **Other** | 66 | 32% | 26% | 23% | 20% |

*Note.* SF leaders responded 'Yes, can comment' and 'Yes, cannot comment' significantly more than CA leaders ($\chi^2$ = 17.68, *df* = 3, *p* = 0.001). SF leaders responded 'Yes, can comment' and 'Yes, cannot comment' significantly more than MISG operators ($\chi^2$ = 41.24, *df* = 3, *p* < 0.001).

*Table 3.* SOF Operator Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit

| | | Interpreter Use on a Mission - Past 4 Years | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Yes** | **No** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 7 | 57% | 43% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 30 | 93% | 7% |
| **CA/PSYOP HQ** | 3 | 33% | 67% |
| **4th MISG** | 175 | 77% | 23% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 201 | 69% | 31% |
| **1st SFG** | 81 | 86% | 14% |
| **3rd SFG** | 93 | 88% | 12% |
| **5th SFG** | 164 | 84% | 16% |
| **7th SFG** | 108 | 88% | 12% |
| **10th SFG** | 63 | 94% | 6% |
| **19th SFG** | 13 | 62% | 38% |
| **20th SFG** | 30 | 47% | 53% |

*Table 4.* SOF Leader Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit

| | | Interpreter Use During Tenure | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Yes, can comment** | **Yes, cannot comment** | **No** | **Don't know/N/A** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 20 | 35% | 25% | 25% | 15% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 41 | 17% | 22% | 27% | 34% |
| **4th MISG** | 110 | 24% | 45% | 9% | 23% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 72 | 29% | 47% | 8% | 15% |
| **1st SFG** | 45 | 47% | 44% | 4% | 4% |
| **3rd SFG** | 51 | 57% | 35% | 8% | 0% |
| **5th SFG** | 82 | 70% | 17% | 9% | 5% |
| **7th SFG** | 38 | 50% | 29% | 5% | 16% |
| **10th SFG** | 50 | 52% | 40% | 2% | 6% |
| **19th SFG** | 10 | 50% | 50% | 0% | 0% |
| **20th SFG** | 11 | 27% | 36% | 27% | 9% |

For SOF operators, interpreter use varied depending on language proficiency levels across all modalities (Tables 5-7, pp. 13-14); specifically, SOF operators with lower proficiency levels used interpreters more often than SOF operators with higher proficiency levels. However, it is important to note that we asked about interpreter use over the past four years, but asked about current language proficiency levels. Therefore, it is possible that respondents' proficiency may have differed at the time of interpreter use [e.g., four years ago, respondents reporting current Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level 3 proficiency likely had a lower proficiency level].

*Table 5.* SOF Operator Interpreter Use by Self-Reported Listening Proficiency Level

| Interpreter Use on a Mission - Past 4 Years | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Listening 0** | 120 | 86% | 14% |
| **Listening 0+** | 351 | 88% | 12% |
| **Listening 1** | 227 | 81% | 19% |
| **Listening 1+** | 176 | 79% | 21% |
| **Listening 2** | 136 | 65% | 35% |
| **Listening 2+** | 98 | 79% | 21% |
| **Listening 3** | 64 | 63% | 37% |
| **Listening 3+** | 9 | 78% | 22% |
| **Listening 4** | 6 | 67% | 33% |
| **Listening 4+** | 2 | 50% | 50% |
| **Listening 5** | 42 | 76% | 24% |

*Note.* This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

*Table 6.* SOF Operator Interpreter Use by Self-Reported Reading Proficiency Level

| Interpreter Use on a Mission - Past 4 Years | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Reading 0** | 129 | 89% | 11% |
| **Reading 0+** | 302 | 88% | 12% |
| **Reading 1** | 188 | 87% | 13% |
| **Reading 1+** | 187 | 75% | 25% |
| **Reading 2** | 155 | 72% | 28% |
| **Reading 2+** | 113 | 75% | 25% |
| **Reading 3** | 94 | 65% | 35% |
| **Reading 3+** | 9 | 67% | 33% |
| **Reading 4** | 8 | 75% | 25% |
| **Reading 4+** | 2 | 50% | 50% |
| **Reading 5** | 40 | 78% | 22% |

*Note.* This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

*Table 7.* SOF Operator Interpreter Use by Self-Reported Speaking Proficiency Level

| | | Interpreter Use on a Mission - Past 4 Years | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Speaking 0** | 125 | 86% | 14% |
| **Speaking 0+** | 255 | 89% | 11% |
| **Speaking 1** | 231 | 79% | 21% |
| **Speaking 1+** | 170 | 85% | 15% |
| **Speaking 2** | 140 | 69% | 31% |
| **Speaking 2+** | 93 | 75% | 25% |
| **Speaking 3** | 65 | 72% | 28% |
| **Speaking 3+** | 16 | 50% | 50% |
| **Speaking 4** | 8 | 50% | 50% |
| **Speaking 4+** | 4 | 50% | 50% |
| **Speaking 5** | 49 | 78% | 22% |

*Note.* This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

*Inside AOR interpreter use*

Both SOF operators and leaders reported a high frequency of interpreter use inside their AOR, a surprising finding given that SOF operators should receive language training in their current official or required AOR language. On inside AOR missions, more than half (57%) of SOF operators and leaders' units (70%) used interpreters *often* or *very often* (Figure 3, p. 15). SOF operators ($M$ = 3.44) reported significantly less interpreter use inside the AOR than did SOF leaders ($M$ = 3.91).

There were significant differences across USASOC units as reported by SOF operators (Table 8, p. 16) and leaders (Table 9, p. 17), although most differences were between 7th SFG and other USASOC organizations. This finding is expected given that 7th SFG does not use interpreters on inside AOR missions. Specifically, 84% of 7th SFG operators never use interpreters inside their AOR. Both 3rd and 5th SFG used interpreters more frequently than other USASOC units; 81% of 3rd SFG operators and 88% of 5th SFG operators reported using interpreters *often* or *very often*. This high level of interpreter use may be attributable to the current deployment areas of these groups. At the time of this survey, 3rd SFG operators were deploying to Afghanistan, and 5th SFG operators were deploying to Iraq. There are many dialects in both Iraq and Afghanistan for which SOF operators do not receive language training.

USASOC leaders reported similar findings for their units. 3rd SFG leaders indicated their operator used interpreters significantly more often than several other USASOC organizations (e.g., 4th MISG, 7th SFG). On the other hand, 5th SFG leaders indicated their operators used interpreters significantly more often than 3rd SFG. There were no significant differences across Army SOF types or SOF organizations for either SOF operators or leaders (Appendix E, Tables 1 and 2).

*Figure 3.* Interpreter Use Inside the AOR
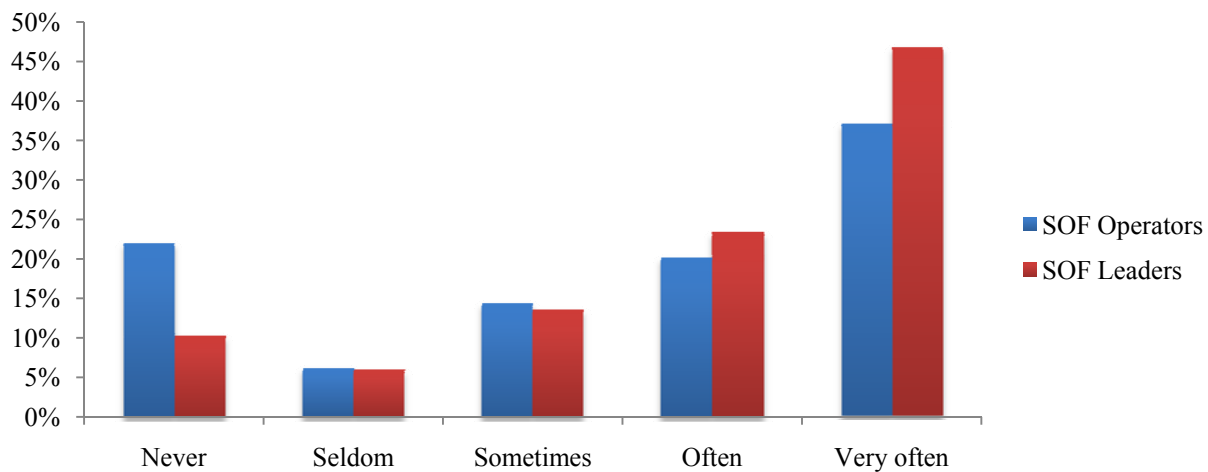


*Note.* SOF leader: Total $n$ = 352, $M$ = 3.91, $SD$ = 1.33. SOF operator: Total $n$ = 997, $M$ = 3.44, $SD$ = 1.56. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

There were significant differences related to use of interpreters inside the AOR based on language proficiency (Tables 10-12, pp. 18-20). There was a negative relationship between SOF operators' inside AOR use of interpreters and their self-rated listening proficiency ($r$ = -0.36, $p$ < .001), self-rated reading proficiency ($r$ = -0.39, $p$ < .001), and self-rated speaking proficiency ($r$ = -0.36, $p$ < .001), indicating that SOF operators with higher levels of language proficiency tend to use interpreters less frequently.

For example, 52% of SOF operators with a self-rated speaking proficiency of ILR level 0 reported using interpreters inside the AOR *very often*, while only 17% of SOF operators with a self-rated speaking proficiency of ILR level 3 reported using interpreters inside the AOR *very often*. This suggests that SOF operators with more proficiency rely less on interpreters, which is what USSOCOM wants.

*Table 8.* SOF Operator Inside AOR Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit

| | | | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 28 | 3.21 [a,c] | 29% | 7% | 7% | 29% | 29% |
| **4th MISG** | 101 | 3.40 [a,b,c] | 23% | 8% | 17% | 12% | 41% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 115 | 3.25 [a,b,c] | 25% | 8% | 14% | 23% | 30% |
| **1st SFG** | 66 | 3.33 [a,b,c] | 14% | 11% | 30% | 20% | 26% |
| **3rd SFG** | 80 | 4.20 [a,b] | 8% | 4% | 8% | 24% | 57% |
| **5th SFG** | 138 | 4.43 [a,c] | 1% | 1% | 9% | 31% | 57% |
| **7th SFG** | 93 | 1.41 [a,b,c] | 84% | 3% | 5% | 3% | 4% |
| **10th SFG** | 53 | 3.34 [a,b,c] | 17% | 8% | 28% | 19% | 28% |
| **19th SFG** | 8 | 4.25 [a] | 0% | 0% | 25% | 25% | 50% |
| **20th SFG** | 13 | 2.46 [b,c] | 38% | 23% | 15% | 0% | 23% |

*Note.* a) SWCS Staff, 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, 10th SFG, and 19th SFG use interpreters more than 7th SFG.

b) 3rd SFG uses interpreters more than 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 7th SFG, 10th SFG, and 20th SFG.

c) 5th SFG uses interpreters more than SWCS Staff, 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 7th SFG, 10th SFG, and 20th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, SF Command HQ, CA/MISG HQ) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 9.*  SOF Leader Inside AOR Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit

| | | | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 3.00 a,b | 33% | 0% | 33% | 0% | 33% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 7 | 3.29 a,b | 29% | 0% | 14% | 29% | 29% |
| **4th MISG** | 26 | 3.85 b | 8% | 0% | 19% | 46% | 27% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 4.05 b | 5% | 9% | 9% | 29% | 48% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 3.86 a,b,c | 0% | 0% | 48% | 19% | 33% |
| **3rd SFG** | 29 | 4.24 b,d | 3% | 3% | 17% | 17% | 59% |
| **5th SFG** | 57 | 4.81 d | 0% | 0% | 2% | 16% | 82% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 1.05 b | 95% | 5% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 4.08 c | 4% | 0% | 23% | 31% | 42% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 4.80 d | 0% | 0% | 0% | 80% | 20% |

*Note.*  a) 1st SFG uses interpreters more than USASOC HQ and SWCS Staff.

b) 3rd SFG uses interpreters more than USASOC HQ, SWCS Staff, 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, and 7th SFG.

c) 10th SFG uses interpreters more than 1st SFG.

d) 5th SFG and 19th SFG use interpreters more than 3rd SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 10.* SOF Operator Inside AOR Interpreter Use by Self-Reported Listening Proficiency Level

| | | | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | **n** | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **Listening 0** | 99 | 4.18 [a] | 8% | 0% | 13% | 23% | 56% |
| **Listening 0+** | 288 | 3.76 [a] | 14% | 6% | 15% | 24% | 42% |
| **Listening 1** | 169 | 3.63 [b] | 20% | 5% | 12% | 21% | 43% |
| **Listening 1+** | 123 | 3.15 [a,c] | 27% | 8% | 19% | 16% | 30% |
| **Listening 2** | 84 | 3.00 [a,d] | 30% | 8% | 18% | 20% | 24% |
| **Listening 2+** | 73 | 2.88 [a,b] | 32% | 14% | 16% | 12% | 26% |
| **Listening 3** | 35 | 2.17 [a,b,c] | 51% | 11% | 17% | 9% | 11% |
| **Listening 3+** | 6 | 1.67 [a] | 67% | 0% | 33% | 0% | 0% |
| **Listening 5** | 28 | 1.93 [a,b,c,d] | 61% | 14% | 7% | 7% | 11% |

*Note.* This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

    a) 0 and 0+ use interpreters more than 1+, 2, 2+, 3, 3+, and 5.

    b) 1 uses interpreters more than 2+, 3, and 5.

    c) 1+ uses interpreters more than 3 and 5.

    d) 2 uses interpreters more than 5.

    Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., 4, 4+) were omitted.

    1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 11.* SOF Operator Inside AOR Interpreter Use by Self-Reported Reading Proficiency Level

| Group | n | Mean | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| **Reading 0** | 109 | 4.14 [a] | 8% | 1% | 12% | 27% | 52% |
| **Reading 0+** | 251 | 3.98 [a] | 10% | 4% | 14% | 24% | 49% |
| **Reading 1** | 146 | 3.56 [b] | 19% | 4% | 15% | 25% | 37% |
| **Reading 1+** | 129 | 3.03 [a,c] | 28% | 12% | 16% | 16% | 28% |
| **Reading 2** | 102 | 3.22 [a,c] | 25% | 8% | 21% | 12% | 34% |
| **Reading 2+** | 79 | 2.75 [a,b] | 37% | 8% | 19% | 18% | 19% |
| **Reading 3** | 57 | 2.44 [a,b] | 44% | 18% | 9% | 11% | 19% |
| **Reading 3+** | 5 | 1.80 [a] | 60% | 0% | 40% | 0% | 0% |
| **Reading 4** | 6 | 2.33 | 67% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 33% |
| **Reading 5** | 27 | 1.78 [a,b,c] | 67% | 11% | 7% | 7% | 7% |

*Note*. This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

    a) 0 and 0+ use interpreters more than 1+, 2, 2+, 3, 3+, and 5.

    b) 1 uses interpreters more than 2+, 3, and 5.

    c) 1+ and 2 use interpreters more than 5.

    Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., 4+) were omitted.

    1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 12*.  SOF Operator Inside AOR Interpreter Use by Self-Reported Speaking Proficiency Level

| Group | n | Mean | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| Speaking 0 | 99 | 3.93 [a] | 13% | 2% | 15% | 18% | 52% |
| Speaking 0+ | 213 | 3.94 [b] | 11% | 4% | 12% | 26% | 47% |
| Speaking 1 | 166 | 3.69 [c] | 16% | 6% | 14% | 22% | 42% |
| Speaking 1+ | 133 | 3.30 [b] | 24% | 6% | 16% | 24% | 30% |
| Speaking 2 | 92 | 2.83 [a,b,c] | 32% | 12% | 21% | 14% | 22% |
| Speaking 2+ | 64 | 3.08 [a,b,d] | 28% | 9% | 17% | 17% | 28% |
| Speaking 3 | 41 | 2.24 [a,b,c] | 49% | 15% | 17% | 2% | 17% |
| Speaking 3+ | 7 | 2.43 | 57% | 0% | 14% | 0% | 29% |
| Speaking 5 | 34 | 2.00 [a,b,c,d] | 62% | 9% | 9% | 9% | 12% |

*Note*.  This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

a) 0 uses interpreters more than 2, 2+, 3, and 5.

b) 0+ uses interpreters more than 1+, 2, 2+, 3, and 5.

c) 1 uses interpreters more than 2, 3, and 5.

d) 2+ uses interpreters more than 5.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g.,  4, 4+) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Outside AOR interpreter use*

SOF operators and leaders reported a very high frequency of interpreter use outside the AOR.  This is expected given that SOF operators receive little, if any, language training for outside AOR deployments. Most SOF operators (71%) and leaders (75%) reported using an interpreter *often* or *very often* on outside AOR missions (Figure 4, p. 21).  SOF operators ($M = 3.93$) reported a lower frequency of interpreter use outside the AOR than SOF leaders ($M = 4.16$).  For SOF operators, there were significant differences by SOF organization (Table 13, p. 22) and by USASOC unit (Table 14, p. 23).  Specifically, TSOC and Deployed SO units reported the greatest amount of use among SOF organizations, and SF reported the greatest amount of use among Army SOF types.  For SOF leaders, there were significant differences by SOF organization (Table 15, p. 24) and by USASOC unit (Table 16, p. 25).  There were no significant differences by Army SOF type.  Specifically, TSOC units used interpreters outside the AOR less than Deployed SO Units and USASOC units, 1st SFG used interpreters more frequently outside the AOR than 3rd and 5th SFG.

*Figure 4.*  Interpreter Use Outside the AOR
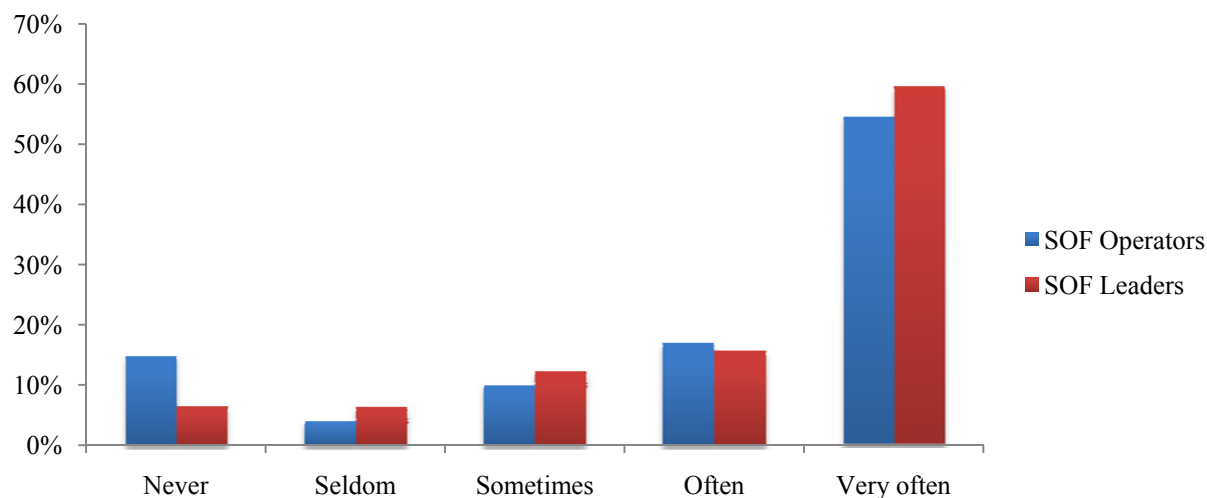


*Note*.  SOF Leader: Total $n = 342$, $M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.23$. SOF Operator: Total $n = 983$, $M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.46$.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Table 13.* SOF Operator Outside AOR Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Outside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 118 | 3.75 | 19% | 3% | 13% | 17% | 49% |
| **AFSOC** | 9 | 2.22 [a] | 44% | 11% | 22% | 22% | 0% |
| **MARSOC** | 14 | 3.21 | 29% | 0% | 21% | 21% | 29% |
| **WARCOM** | 9 | 3.56 | 22% | 11% | 0% | 22% | 44% |
| **USASOC** | 707 | 3.97 [a] | 14% | 4% | 9% | 16% | 56% |
| *CA* | 118 | 3.96 | 14% | 6% | 8% | 17% | 56% |
| *MISG* | 108 | 3.71 | 21% | 2% | 13% | 12% | 52% |
| *SF* | 471 | 4.01 | 13% | 3% | 9% | 18% | 57% |
| **TSOC** | 13 | 4.23 | 8% | 0% | 23% | 0% | 69% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 51 | 4.10 [a] | 12% | 2% | 6% | 25% | 55% |
| **Other** | 60 | 4.03 [a] | 7% | 12% | 10% | 15% | 57% |

*Note.* a) USASOC, Deployed SO Units, and Other components used interpreters more frequently than AFSOC.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., JSOC) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 14.* SOF Operator Outside AOR Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit

| | | | Outside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | **n** | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 27 | 4.26 [a] | 15% | 0% | 0% | 15% | 70% |
| **4th MISG** | 103 | 3.65 [b] | 22% | 2% | 14% | 13% | 50% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 111 | 3.96 [a,b] | 14% | 6% | 7% | 17% | 56% |
| **1st SFG** | 65 | 4.35 [a] | 5% | 3% | 8% | 22% | 63% |
| **3rd SFG** | 76 | 3.92 [a,b] | 14% | 5% | 7% | 21% | 53% |
| **5th SFG** | 133 | 3.15 [a] | 29% | 8% | 14% | 18% | 32% |
| **7th SFG** | 95 | 4.77 [a,b] | 1% | 0% | 5% | 8% | 85% |
| **10th SFG** | 55 | 4.31 [a] | 5% | 0% | 11% | 25% | 58% |
| **19th SFG** | 8 | 3.13 | 38% | 0% | 12% | 12% | 38% |
| **20th SFG** | 13 | 4.77 [a] | 0% | 0% | 8% | 8% | 85% |

*Note.* a) SWCS Staff, 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 7th SFG, 10th SFG, 20th SFG, and 95th CA Bde use interpreters more frequently than 5th SFG.

b) 7th SFG uses interpreters more frequently than 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, and 3rd SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 15.* SOF Leader Outside AOR Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Outside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 34 | 4.06 | 6% | 6% | 24% | 6% | 59% |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 4.40 | 0% | 0% | 20% | 20% | 60% |
| **USASOC** | 225 | 4.21 [a] | 5% | 6% | 12% | 16% | 61% |
| *CA* | 21 | 4.43 | 10% | 0% | 5% | 10% | 76% |
| *MISG* | 25 | 4.32 | 0% | 4% | 16% | 24% | 56% |
| *SF* | 158 | 4.19 | 4% | 7% | 13% | 16% | 59% |
| **TSOC** | 24 | 3.13 [a] | 25% | 13% | 17% | 17% | 29% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 31 | 4.81 [a] | 0% | 0% | 3% | 13% | 84% |
| **Other** | 17 | 4.00 | 12% | 6% | 0% | 35% | 47% |

*Note.* a) Deployed SO Units and USASOC used interpreters more frequently than TSOC

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 16.* SOF Leader Outside AOR Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit

| | | | Outside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 4.33 | 17% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 83% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 7 | 3.71 | 29% | 0% | 0% | 14% | 57% |
| **4th MISG** | 25 | 4.32 | 0% | 4% | 16% | 24% | 56% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 4.43 | 10% | 0% | 5% | 10% | 76% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 4.81 [a] | 0% | 0% | 0% | 19% | 81% |
| **3rd SFG** | 29 | 3.90 [a] | 10% | 7% | 21% | 7% | 55% |
| **5th SFG** | 52 | 3.67 [a] | 4% | 17% | 21% | 23% | 35% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 5.00 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 4.81 | 0% | 0% | 4% | 12% | 85% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 3.80 | 0% | 0% | 40% | 40% | 20% |

*Note.* a) 1st SFG used interpreters more frequently than 3rd SFG and 5th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

## SECTION III: RELIANCE ON INTERPRETERS

This section describes SOF operators' reliance on interpreters. Specifically, this section examines SOF operators' mission effectiveness without the aid of an interpreter, SOF leaders' confidence in their units' ability to carry out SOF core tasks without the aid of an interpreter, the importance of interpreters, and SOF operators' dependency on interpreters.

**Research Questions**

This section addresses the following questions:
- How dependent are SOF operators on interpreters during inside and outside AOR deployments?
- How important are interpreters for SOF tactical elements to carry out missions on inside and outside AOR deployments?
- How effective would SOF operators be on inside and outside AOR missions without the use of interpreters?
- Does deployment type (i.e., inside AOR, outside AOR, or both) relate to SOF operators' perceived effectiveness without the use of an interpreter?
- Does SOF operators' current official or required AOR language proficiency level impact their effectiveness on inside AOR missions?
- When deployment language proficiency is lacking, which tasks do SOF operators typically use an interpreter to perform?

**Main Findings**

Overall, SOF operators rely heavily on interpreters. According to SOF leaders, SOF operators in their units are very dependent on interpreters and interpreters are important to mission success on both inside and outside AOR deployments. Furthermore, SOF operators report that mission effectiveness would suffer if interpreters were not available. On inside AOR deployments where SOF operators have proficiency in the deployment language, SOF operators with higher levels proficiency indicate they are significantly more effective without interpreters than SOF operators with lower levels proficiency. That is, as proficiency increases, reliance on interpreters decreases, which is what USSOCOM wants and an argument for organic capability.

Additionally, the type of mission moderates SOF operators' confidence without interpreters. SOF leaders were more confident in their unit's ability to perform SOF core tasks without the aid of an interpreter when the task required little interaction with the local populace (e.g., direct action missions) than when the task required significant interaction with the local populace (e.g., military information support operations). Similarly, SOF operators generally used interpreters for language-intensive tasks, such as building rapport with locals.

**Detailed Findings**

*Dependency on interpreters*

SOF leaders[4] report that their units' SOF operators are dependent on interpreters during both inside and outside AOR deployments (Figure 5, p. 27). There was a greater perceived dependency on interpreters for missions outside the AOR. Fifty-seven percent of SOF leaders reported that their units were either *dependent* or *very dependent* on interpreters during inside AOR deployments, while 66% of SOF leaders reported that their units were either *dependent* or *very dependent* on interpreters during outside AOR deployments.

*Figure 5.* SOF Leader Ratings of Dependency on Interpreters
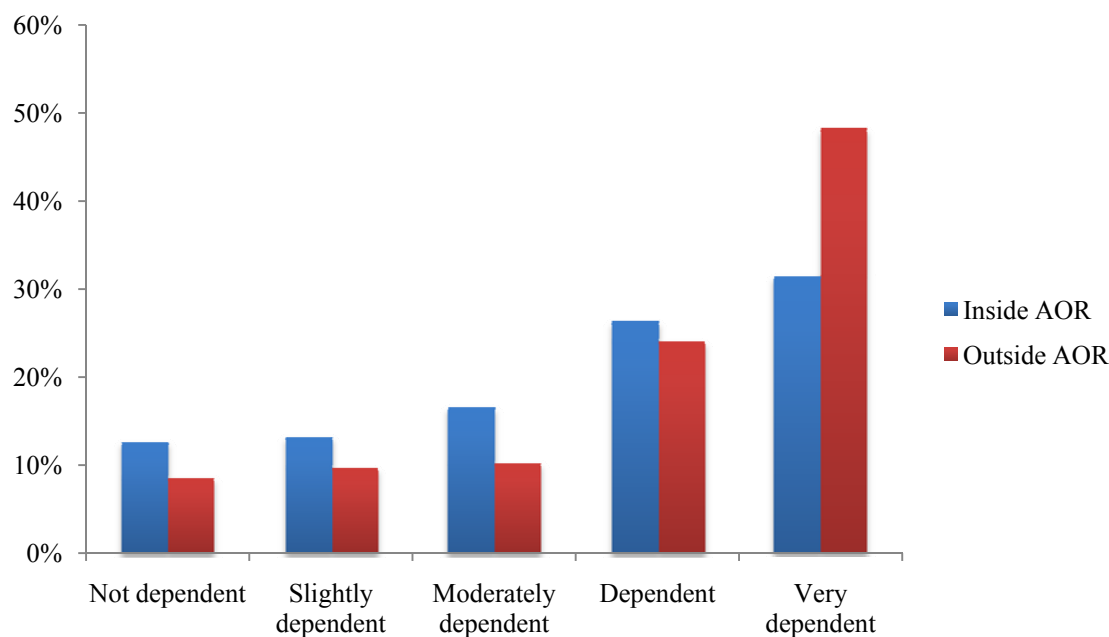


*Note.* Inside AOR: Total *n* = 350, *M* = 3.51, *SD* = 1.38. Outside AOR: Total *n* = 342, *M* = 3.94, *SD* = 1.31. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

SOF organizations (e.g., AFSOC, MARSOC, etc.) did not differ significantly on inside AOR interpreter dependency as rated by SOF leaders (Appendix F, Table 1). However, there were subgroup differences across USASOC units (Table 17, p. 29). 7th SFG leaders indicated that their units' SOF operators were significantly less dependent on interpreters during inside AOR deployments than all other USASOC units. This is expected given that 7th SFG does not use interpreters during inside AOR deployments. On the other hand, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, and 19th SFG leaders indicated their units' SOF operators were significantly more dependent on interpreters during inside AOR deployments than other USASOC units.

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[4] SOF operator responses to this item are not included in this report. The *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011012) report provides details on SOF operators' interpreter use on inside and outside AOR deployments. See Appendix B: Methodology for the survey items assessed in this report.

Deployed SO Units, USASOC, and USSOCOM HQ leaders reported their units' SOF operators were significantly more dependent on interpreters during outside AOR deployments than other SOF groups (Table 18, p. 30). Furthermore, 7th SFG, 10th SFG, and 95th CA Bde leaders indicated that their units' SOF operators were significantly more dependent on interpreters during outside AOR deployments in comparison to other USASOC units (Table 19, p. 31).

*Table 17.* SOF Leader Ratings of Dependency on Interpreters Inside the AOR by USASOC Unit

| Group | *n* | Mean | Dependency on Interpreters - Inside AOR | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Not dependent | Slightly dependent | Moderately dependent | Dependent | Very dependent |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 3.33 [a] | 17% | 33% | 0% | 0% | 50% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 7 | 3.29 [a] | 29% | 14% | 0% | 14% | 43% |
| **4th MISG** | 26 | 3.46 [a] | 12% | 8% | 23% | 38% | 19% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 3.38 [a] | 10% | 19% | 19% | 29% | 24% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 2.86 [a,b] | 10% | 33% | 29% | 19% | 10% |
| **3rd SFG** | 29 | 4.03 [a,b] | 3% | 17% | 7% | 17% | 55% |
| **5th SFG** | 57 | 4.26 [a,b] | 0% | 4% | 14% | 35% | 47% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 1.05 [a] | 95% | 5% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 3.35 [a] | 4% | 19% | 31% | 31% | 15% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 4.80 [a] | 0% | 0% | 0% | 20% | 80% |

*Note.* a) USASOC HQ, SWCS Staff, 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, 10th SFG, and 19th SFG were more dependent on interpreters inside the AOR than 7th SFG.

b) 3rd SFG and 5th SFG were more dependent on interpreters inside the AOR than 1st SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Not dependent*, 2 = *Slightly dependent*, 3 = *Moderately dependent*, 4 = *Dependent*, 5 = *Very dependent*

*Table 18.* SOF Leader Ratings of Dependency on Interpreters Outside the AOR by SOF organization and Army SOF type

| | | | Dependency on Interpreters - Outside AOR | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | *n* | Mean | Not dependent | Slightly dependent | Moderately dependent | Dependent | Very dependent |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 3.60 | 0% | 20% | 40% | 0% | 40% |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 36 | 4.11 [a] | 6% | 6% | 11% | 28% | 50% |
| **USASOC** | 225 | 3.99 [a] | 7% | 9% | 11% | 23% | 50% |
| *CA* | 21 | 4.52 | 5% | 0% | 0% | 29% | 67% |
| *MISG* | 25 | 3.80 | 16% | 8% | 8% | 16% | 52% |
| *SF* | 160 | 3.94 | 7% | 11% | 13% | 22% | 48% |
| **TSOC** | 23 | 2.87 [a] | 30% | 13% | 17% | 17% | 22% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 31 | 4.45 [a] | 0% | 3% | 3% | 39% | 55% |
| **Other** | 16 | 3.69 | 19% | 13% | 0% | 19% | 50% |

*Note.*  a) USSOCOM HQ, USASOC, and Deployed SO Units were more dependent on interpreters than TSOC

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted.

1 = *Not dependent*, 2 = *Slightly dependent*, 3 = *Moderately dependent*, 4 = *Dependent*, 5 = *Very dependent*

*Table 19.* SOF Leader Ratings of Dependency on Interpreters Outside the AOR by USASOC Unit

| | | | Dependency on Interpreters - Outside AOR | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Not dependent** | **Slightly dependent** | **Moderately dependent** | **Dependent** | **Very dependent** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 4.17 | 0% | 0% | 17% | 50% | 33% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 6 | 4.17 | 0% | 17% | 0% | 33% | 50% |
| **4th MISG** | 25 | 3.80 | 16% | 8% | 8% | 16% | 52% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 4.52 [a] | 5% | 0% | 0% | 29% | 67% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 4.29 | 0% | 5% | 10% | 38% | 48% |
| **3rd SFG** | 29 | 3.90 | 3% | 17% | 10% | 24% | 45% |
| **5th SFG** | 54 | 3.32 [a] | 13% | 20% | 19% | 19% | 30% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 4.63 [a] | 5% | 0% | 5% | 5% | 84% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 4.69 [a] | 0% | 0% | 8% | 15% | 77% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 3.40 | 20% | 0% | 20% | 40% | 20% |

*Note.* a) 95th CA Bde, 7th SFG, and 10th SFG were more dependent on interpreters than 5th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Not dependent*, 2 = *Slightly dependent*, 3 = *Moderately dependent*, 4 = *Dependent*, 5 = *Very dependent*

*Importance of interpreters*

SOF leaders[5] reported that interpreters are important for their units' SOF operators to carry out missions on inside and outside AOR deployments (Figure 6, p. 32).  Although SOF operators frequently have some level of language proficiency on inside AOR deployments, interpreters were nearly as important for carrying out missions on these deployments as they were to carrying out missions on outside AOR deployments.  Specifically, 65% of SOF leaders reported that interpreters were *important* or *very important* for carrying out missions on inside AOR deployments, while a slightly higher but similar percentage of SOF leaders (73%) reported that they were *important* or *very important* for carrying out missions on outside AOR deployments.

*Figure 6.*  SOF Leader Ratings of Importance of Interpreters for Carrying Out Missions
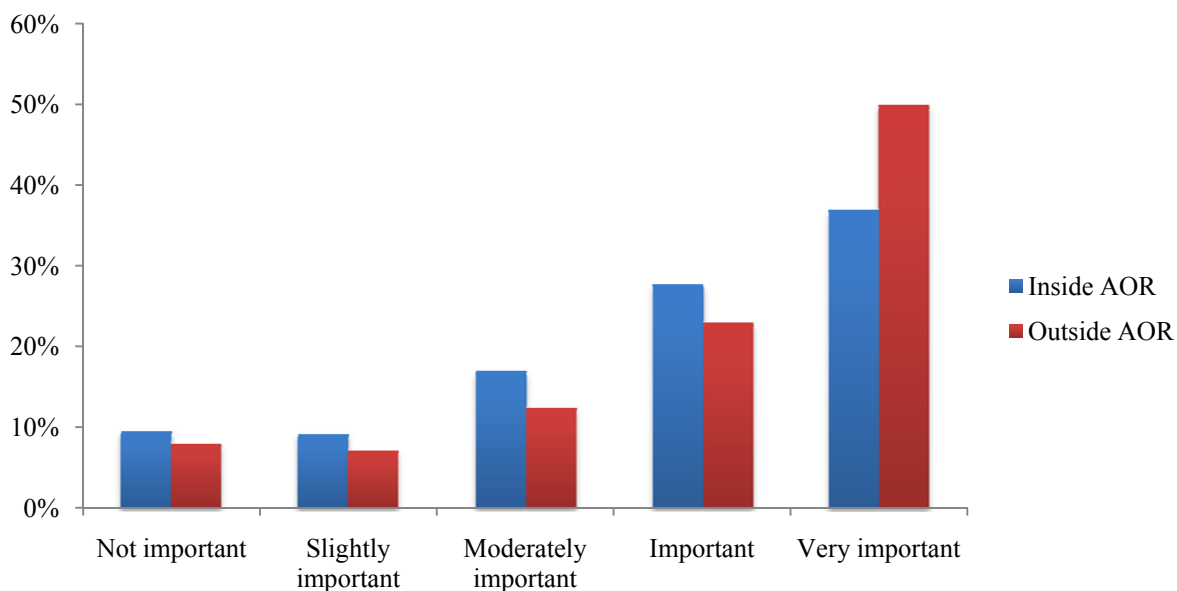


*Note.*  Inside AOR: Total $n$ = 350, $M$ = 3.73, $SD$ = 1.30. Outside AOR: Total $n$ = 341, $M$ = 4.00, $SD$ = 1.27.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

There were no significant SOF organization differences regarding interpreter importance for inside AOR deployments (Appendix F, Table 2).  However, there were significant differences across USASOC units regarding interpreter importance on inside AOR deployments (Table 20, p. 34); specifically, 7th SFG leaders rated interpreters as less important than all other USASOC units, which makes sense given their AOR.

For outside AOR deployments, there were significant differences among SOF organizations (Table 21, p. 35).  Specifically, USSOCOM HQ, USASOC, and deployed SO units rated interpreters as significantly

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[5] SOF operator responses to this item are not included in this report.  The *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011012) report provides details on SOF operators' interpreter use on inside and outside AOR deployments.  See Appendix B: Methodology for the survey items assessed in this report.

more important than TSOC.  Additionally, there were significant differences across USASOC units regarding interpreter importance on outside AOR deployments (Table 22, p. 36).  Specifically, 95th CA Bde, 7th SFG, and 10th SFG leaders indicated that interpreters were more important to carrying out missions on outside AOR deployments than 5th SFG leaders.

*Table 20.* SOF Leader Ratings of Importance of Interpreters Inside the AOR by USASOC Unit

| | | | Importance of Interpreters - Inside AOR | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Not important** | **Slightly important** | **Moderately important** | **Important** | **Very important** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 3.33 [a] | 17% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 33% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 7 | 3.43 [a] | 29% | 14% | 0% | 0% | 57% |
| **4th MISG** | 26 | 3.96 [a] | 8% | 0% | 15% | 42% | 35% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 3.71 [a] | 10% | 10% | 19% | 24% | 38% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 3.24 [a] | 0% | 38% | 14% | 33% | 14% |
| **3rd SFG** | 29 | 4.21 [a] | 0% | 17% | 7% | 14% | 62% |
| **5th SFG** | 57 | 4.18 [a] | 0% | 4% | 18% | 37% | 42% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 1.37 [a] | 84% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 5% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 3.65 [a] | 0% | 12% | 38% | 23% | 27% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 4.60 [a] | 0% | 0% | 0% | 40% | 60% |

*Note*. a) The importance of interpreters was lower for 7th SFG than for all other units.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Not important*, 2 = *Slightly important*, 3 = *Moderately important*, 4 = *Important*, 5 = *Very important*

*Table 21*. SOF Leader Ratings of Importance of Interpreters Outside the AOR by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Importance of Interpreters - Outside AOR | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Not important** | **Slightly important** | **Moderately important** | **Important** | **Very important** |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 4.00 | 20% | 0% | 0% | 40% | 40% |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 36 | 4.22 [a] | 8% | 3% | 14% | 31% | 44% |
| **USASOC** | 224 | 4.04 [a] | 11% | 9% | 17% | 27% | 36% |
| *CA* | 21 | 4.57 | 5% | 0% | 0% | 24% | 71% |
| *MISG* | 25 | 3.88 | 16% | 4% | 12% | 12% | 56% |
| *SF* | 158 | 4.00 | 5% | 9% | 16% | 20% | 49% |
| **TSOC** | 23 | 2.96 [a] | 4% | 13% | 35% | 30% | 17% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 31 | 4.42 [a] | 7% | 10% | 13% | 30% | 40% |
| **Other** | 16 | 3.75 | 0% | 6% | 25% | 25% | 44% |

*Note*.  a) Interpreters were more important for USSOCOM HQ, USASOC, and Deployed SO Units than for TSOC.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted

1 = *Not important*, 2 = *Slightly important*, 3 = *Moderately important*, 4 = *Important*, 5 = *Very important*

*Table 22.* SOF Leader Ratings of Importance of Interpreters Outside the AOR by USASOC Unit

| Group | *n* | Mean | Importance of Interpreters - Outside AOR | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Not important | Slightly important | Moderately important | Important | Very important |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 4.33 | 0% | 0% | 17% | 33% | 50% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 7 | 3.71 | 14% | 14% | 0% | 29% | 43% |
| **4th MISG** | 25 | 3.88 | 16% | 4% | 12% | 12% | 56% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 4.57 [a] | 5% | 0% | 0% | 24% | 71% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 4.29 | 0% | 5% | 14% | 29% | 52% |
| **3rd SFG** | 28 | 3.93 | 4% | 18% | 11% | 18% | 50% |
| **5th SFG** | 54 | 3.41 [a] | 11% | 13% | 28% | 20% | 28% |
| **7th SFG** | 18 | 4.78 [a] | 0% | 0% | 6% | 11% | 83% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 4.69 [a] | 0% | 0% | 8% | 15% | 77% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 3.40 | 20% | 0% | 20% | 40% | 20% |

*Note.* a) Interpreters were more important for 95th CA Bde, 7th SFG, and 10th SFG than for 5th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Not important*, 2 = *Slightly important*, 3 = *Moderately important*, 4 = *Important*, 5 = *Very important*

*Effectiveness without interpreters*

When asked about their effectiveness without interpreters, SOF operators indicated a slightly higher level inside than outside the AOR (Figure 7, p. 37).  Only 39% percent of SOF operators indicated that they would be *effective* or *very effective* in conducting missions on inside AOR deployments without the use of an interpreter.  This is a surprising finding given that most SOF operators receive some language training for the language spoken in their AOR and, thus, should be able to perform basic mission tasks inside their AOR without the use of an interpreter.

SOF operators' effectiveness ratings for inside AOR deployments without interpreters varied across Army SOF types (Table 23, p. 39), USASOC units (Table 24, p. 40), and self-rated current official or required language proficiency levels (Tables 25-27, pp. 41-43).  Specifically, CA and MISG operators indicated that they would be significantly less effective during inside AOR deployments without interpreters than SF operators.  Because 7th SFG operators do not use interpreters for inside AOR deployments, they reported significantly more effectiveness on inside AOR missions without interpreters than SWCS Staff, 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG.

*Figure 7.*  SOF Operator Ratings of Effectiveness without Interpreters
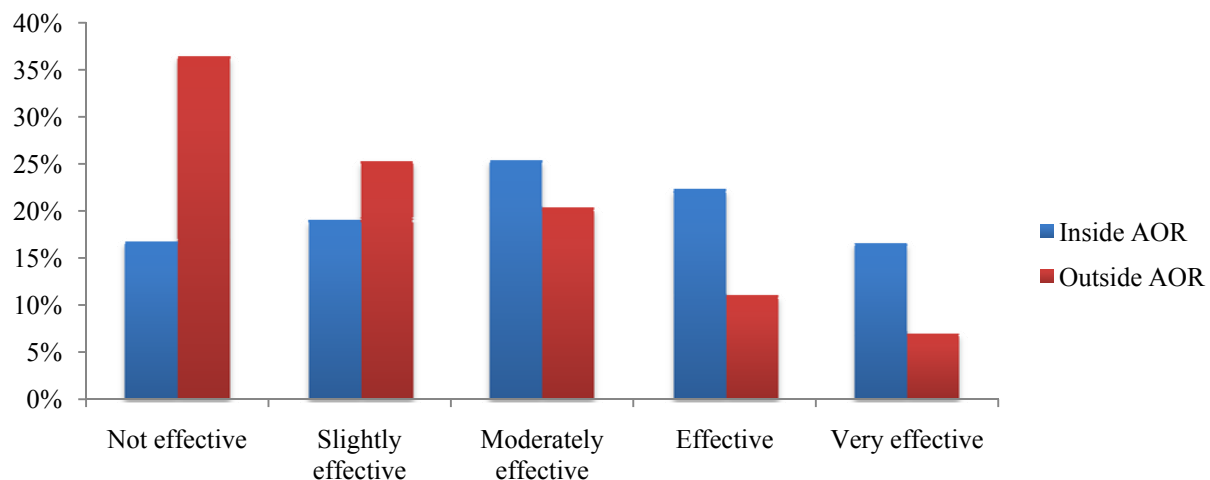


*Note.*  Inside AOR: Total $n$ = 999, $M$ = 3.03, $SD$ = 1.32. Outside AOR: Total $n$ = 988, $M$ = 2.27, $SD$ = 1.25.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

SOF operators with higher language proficiency levels reported more effectiveness on inside AOR deployments without interpreters than SOF operators with less language proficiency.  For example, only 31% of SOF operators with a self-rated speaking proficiency level of 0+ indicated that they would be *effective* or *very effective* on inside AOR deployments without an interpreter, while 70% of SOF operators with a self-rated speaking proficiency level of 3 indicated that they would be *effective* or *very effective*.  This general trend was observed across all language modalities (i.e., listening, reading, and speaking).  Thus, language proficiency plays a critical role in determining mission effectiveness without the aid of an interpreter on inside AOR deployments.  This is the primary argument for developing organic language capability – effectiveness without dependence.

Few SOF operators (18%) indicated that they would be *effective* or *very effective* on missions outside the AOR without the use of interpreters – an expected finding considering the lack of language proficiency outside the AOR.  Two focus group participants' experiences illustrate this lack of effectiveness:

> "I had a mission—a deployment to Afghanistan, and Pashtu, Dari, Urdu—all languages I have no idea—maybe Sanskrit.  But not a language I'm very—I don't know anything about.  So at that point I had an interpreter, but once we'd move on to the objective, the interpreters are a crucial, you know, asset that's going to be utilized by everyone... so my interpreter a lot of times would get pulled.  So at the time I'm not a mission asset because I can't ask people's names or anything else like that.... I can't gather any more information; I can't ask for the name of the person that we're looking for; I can't ask if there are any bad guys that have come in the area."
>
> <div align="right">SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde</div>

> "So we're sending out patrols and knock on somebody's house and you have no language capabilities whatsoever.  There's absolutely no way you can interact with a person and get information—you're basically just wasting your time.  For the most part we didn't have pointy-talkie cards either.  We were just completely without any capabilities whatsoever.  And when we were without the terps we realized just how useless we were because we couldn't accomplish the mission.
>
> <div align="right">SOF Operator, MARSOC</div>

SOF operators' effectiveness ratings for outside AOR deployments without interpreters varied across Army SOF types (Table 28, p. 44) and USASOC units (Table 29, p. 45).  MISG operators reported lower levels of effectiveness without interpreters on outside AOR deployments than SF operators.  Similarly, 4th MISG operators indicated they would be significantly less effective during outside AOR deployments without interpreters than 3rd SFG and 5th SFG operators.  Furthermore, 95th CA Bde operators reported lower levels of effectiveness on outside AOR deployments without interpreters than 5th SFG; while 7th SFG operators indicated less effectiveness than both 3rd SFG and 5th SFG operators.

*Table 23.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Inside the AOR by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Inside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Not effective** | **Slightly effective** | **Moderately effective** | **Effective** | **Very effective** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 119 | 3.12 | 13% | 21% | 23% | 26% | 17% |
| **AFSOC** | 9 | 2.89 | 11% | 44% | 0% | 33% | 11% |
| **MARSOC** | 14 | 2.71 | 21% | 21% | 29% | 21% | 7% |
| **WARCOM** | 9 | 3.00 | 0% | 22% | 56% | 22% | 0% |
| **USASOC** | 716 | 3.04 | 17% | 18% | 27% | 21% | 17% |
| *CA* | 121 | 2.84 [a] | 22% | 20% | 25% | 18% | 15% |
| *MISG* | 108 | 2.71 [a] | 26% | 19% | 28% | 14% | 14% |
| *SF* | 477 | 3.16 [a] | 13% | 18% | 27% | 23% | 19% |
| **TSOC** | 13 | 3.15 | 15% | 8% | 38% | 23% | 15% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 54 | 2.74 | 26% | 24% | 17% | 17% | 17% |
| **Other** | 63 | 3.08 | 16% | 19% | 17% | 37% | 11% |

*Note.* a) SF operators are more effective without an interpreter than MISG and CA operators.

Army SOF types were not compared with other SOF organizations.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., JSOC) were omitted.

1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Table 24.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Inside the AOR by USASOC Unit

| | | | Inside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Not effective** | **Slightly effective** | **Moderately effective** | **Effective** | **Very effective** |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 28 | 3.18 [a] | 11% | 14% | 36% | 25% | 14% |
| **4th MISG** | 103 | 2.69 [a] | 27% | 18% | 26% | 15% | 14% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 114 | 2.79 [a] | 24% | 19% | 25% | 18% | 14% |
| **1st SFG** | 65 | 3.29 [a] | 6% | 11% | 43% | 28% | 12% |
| **3rd SFG** | 80 | 2.61 [a] | 24% | 24% | 28% | 17% | 8% |
| **5th SFG** | 137 | 2.71 [a] | 18% | 24% | 34% | 17% | 7% |
| **7th SFG** | 95 | 4.20 [a] | 5% | 5% | 11% | 22% | 57% |
| **10th SFG** | 52 | 3.19 [a] | 8% | 19% | 29% | 35% | 10% |
| **19th SFG** | 8 | 3.13 | 13% | 25% | 13% | 37% | 13% |
| **20th SFG** | 13 | 3.15 | 8% | 31% | 8% | 46% | 8% |

*Note.* a) 7th SFG operators were more effective without an interpreter than SWCS-Staff, 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG operators.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ) were omitted.

1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Table 25.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Inside the AOR by Self-Rated Listening Proficiency

| | | | Inside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Not effective** | **Slightly effective** | **Moderately effective** | **Effective** | **Very effective** |
| **Listening 0** | 99 | 2.55 [a] | 28% | 20% | 26% | 19% | 6% |
| **Listening 0+** | 288 | 2.90 [b] | 16% | 22% | 32% | 19% | 12% |
| **Listening 1** | 170 | 2.91 [c] | 15% | 24% | 26% | 24% | 11% |
| **Listening 1+** | 125 | 3.04 [c] | 14% | 19% | 28% | 25% | 14% |
| **Listening 2** | 84 | 3.27 [a,d] | 15% | 14% | 23% | 23% | 25% |
| **Listening 2+** | 74 | 3.45 [a,b,c] | 11% | 12% | 24% | 27% | 26% |
| **Listening 3** | 34 | 4.09 [a,b,c] | 12% | 3% | 3% | 29% | 53% |
| **Listening 3+** | 6 | 4.50 [a] | 0% | 0% | 17% | 17% | 67% |
| **Listening 5** | 28 | 4.46 [a,b,c,d] | 7% | 4% | 0% | 14% | 75% |

*Note*. This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

a) 2, 2+, 3, 3+, and 5 more effective than 0

b) 2+, 3, and 5 more effective than 0+.

c) 3 and 5 more effective than 1 and 1+.

d) 5 more effective than 2 and 2+.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., 4, 4+) were omitted.

1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Table 26.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Inside the AOR by Self-Rated Reading Proficiency

**Inside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter**

| Group | *n* | Mean | Not effective | Slightly effective | Moderately effective | Effective | Very effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading 0** | 109 | 2.62 [a] | 25% | 23% | 26% | 19% | 7% |
| **Reading 0+** | 250 | 2.75 [a] | 18% | 23% | 33% | 17% | 8% |
| **Reading 1** | 149 | 3.01 [b] | 14% | 20% | 29% | 24% | 13% |
| **Reading 1+** | 128 | 3.14 [c] | 13% | 19% | 26% | 25% | 17% |
| **Reading 2** | 105 | 3.10 [c] | 15% | 19% | 24% | 25% | 17% |
| **Reading 2+** | 79 | 3.49 [a,c] | 10% | 11% | 25% | 25% | 28% |
| **Reading 3** | 56 | 3.68 [a,b] | 16% | 9% | 7% | 27% | 41% |
| **Reading 3+** | 5 | 4.20 | 0% | 0% | 20% | 40% | 40% |
| **Reading 4** | 6 | 3.00 | 50% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% |
| **Reading 5** | 27 | 4.70 [a,b,c] | 4% | 0% | 0% | 15% | 81% |

*Note*. This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.

a) 2+, 3, and 5 more effective than 0 and 0+.

b) 3 and 5 more effective than 1.

c) 5 more effective than 1+, 2, 2+, and 3.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., 4+) were omitted.

1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Table 27.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Inside the AOR by Self-Rated Speaking Proficiency

| | | | Inside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Not effective** | **Slightly effective** | **Moderately effective** | **Effective** | **Very effective** |
| **Speaking 0** | 99 | 2.64 [a] | 26% | 22% | 20% | 24% | 7% |
| **Speaking 0+** | 213 | 2.81 [b] | 16% | 21% | 38% | 16% | 9% |
| **Speaking 1** | 168 | 2.94 [c] | 14% | 24% | 24% | 27% | 10% |
| **Speaking 1+** | 132 | 3.03 [c] | 14% | 19% | 30% | 22% | 14% |
| **Speaking 2** | 94 | 3.34 [a,b,d] | 14% | 14% | 19% | 31% | 22% |
| **Speaking 2+** | 64 | 3.34 [a,d] | 14% | 16% | 23% | 16% | 31% |
| **Speaking 3** | 40 | 3.88 [a,b,c] | 15% | 3% | 13% | 20% | 50% |
| **Speaking 3+** | 7 | 3.57 | 29% | 0% | 14% | 0% | 57% |
| **Speaking 4** | 4 | 3.25 | 25% | 25% | 0% | 0% | 50% |
| **Speaking 4+** | 2 | 3.00 | 50% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% |
| **Speaking 5** | 34 | 4.38 [a,b,c,d] | 9% | 0% | 3% | 21% | 68% |

*Note*. This table reports Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels.
a) 2, 2+, 3, and 5 more effective than 0.
b) 2, 3, and 5 more effective than 0+.
c) 3 and 5 more effective than 1 and 1+.
d) 5 more effective than 2 and 2+.
Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., 4, 4+) were omitted.
1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Table 28.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Outside the AOR by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Outside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | n | Mean | Not effective | Slightly effective | Moderately effective | Effective | Very effective |
| USSOCOM HQ | 116 | 2.31 | 34% | 28% | 21% | 10% | 8% |
| AFSOC | 9 | 3.22 | 11% | 22% | 11% | 44% | 11% |
| MARSOC | 14 | 2.64 | 21% | 21% | 36% | 14% | 7% |
| WARCOM | 9 | 2.89 | 11% | 33% | 22% | 22% | 11% |
| USASOC | 710 | 2.28 | 36% | 25% | 21% | 11% | 7% |
| CA | 118 | 2.11 | 47% | 17% | 21% | 9% | 6% |
| MISG | 109 | 1.91 [a] | 55% | 20% | 13% | 3% | 9% |
| SF | 473 | 2.41 [a] | 29% | 28% | 23% | 13% | 7% |
| TSOC | 13 | 2.54 | 31% | 23% | 23% | 8% | 15% |
| Deployed SO unit | 53 | 1.93 | 51% | 23% | 13% | 9% | 4% |
| Other | 62 | 2.02 | 42% | 27% | 19% | 10% | 2% |

*Note.* a) SF operators were more effective without an interpreter than MISG operators.

Army SOF types were not compared with other SOF organizations.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., JSOC) were omitted.

1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Table 29.* SOF Operator Effectiveness Without an Interpreter Outside the AOR by USASOC Unit

**Outside AOR Effectiveness Without Interpreter**

| Group | *n* | Mean | Not effective | Slightly effective | Moderately effective | Effective | Very effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SWCS-Staff** | 28 | 1.93 | 43% | 36% | 14% | 0% | 7% |
| **4th MISG** | 104 | 1.93 [a] | 55% | 19% | 13% | 3% | 10% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 111 | 2.08 [b] | 48% | 16% | 22% | 9% | 5% |
| **1st SFG** | 65 | 2.39 | 28% | 29% | 25% | 14% | 5% |
| **3rd SFG** | 78 | 2.63 [a] | 22% | 26% | 29% | 14% | 9% |
| **5th SFG** | 133 | 2.76 [a,b] | 17% | 28% | 27% | 17% | 11% |
| **7th SFG** | 95 | 1.94 [a] | 47% | 27% | 14% | 7% | 4% |
| **10th SFG** | 54 | 2.35 | 28% | 31% | 24% | 11% | 6% |
| **19th SFG** | 8 | 2.38 | 25% | 50% | 0% | 13% | 13% |
| **20th SFG** | 13 | 2.00 | 46% | 23% | 15% | 15% | 0% |

*Note.* a) 3rd and 5th SFG more effective than 4th MISG and 7th SFG.
b) 5th SFG more effective than 95th CA Bde.
Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ) were omitted.
1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*

*Tasks for which SOF operators use interpreters*

SOF operators identified tasks (from the provided task list in Table 30) they would generally use interpreters for in situations where deployment language proficiency was lacking (Table 30, p. 46). The most frequently chosen tasks included listening to and understanding conversations (87%), building rapport with local militia leaders, soldiers, or indigenous personnel (85%), and conducting negotiations (85%). It is not surprising that SOF operators need interpreters for such tasks in cases of insufficient language proficiency because they require significant amounts of interaction in the target language. Examples of the "other" tasks provided by SOF operators included translation, cultural guidance, and media monitoring. See Appendix G for a complete list of "other" tasks.

*Table 30.* Tasks for which Interpreters are Used

| Task | Percent | |
|---|---|---|
| **Listen to and understand conversations with locals** | 87% | |
| **Build rapport with local militia leaders, soldiers, or indigenous personnel** | 85% | |
| **Conduct negotiations** | 85% | |
| **Read signs/graffiti/maps** | 76% | |
| **Train local civilians or military personnel on military or technical topcs** | 75% | |
| **Persuade people to provide sensitive information** | 70% | |
| **Give commands** | 64% | |
| **Other** | 7% | |

*Note. n* = 1,055. For description of "Other," see Appendix G.

*Confidence in performing core SOF tasks without interpreters*

Overall, across all SOF core tasks, only 23% of SOF leaders were *confident* or *very confident* in their unit's ability to carry out the tasks without the aid of an interpreter. However, SOF leaders' confidence varied significantly by task (Table 31, p. 47). For instance, SOF leaders were most confident in their unit's ability to carry out direct action (DA) and special reconnaissance (SR) missions without the aid of an interpreter. These results are expected given that DA and SR missions require little interaction with the local populace or host nation forces. Similarly, SOF leaders were least confident in their unit's ability to carry out civil affairs operations (CAO) and military information support operations (MISO) without the aid of an interpreter. CAO and MISO missions require a significant amount of interaction with the local populace, so in cases where language proficiency was lacking, these missions would be difficult to accomplish without the aid of an interpreter.

*Table 31.* SOF Leaders' Confidence in Unit's Ability to Carry Out Task without Interpreter

| | | | Confidence in Unit's Ability to Carry Out Task Without Interpreter | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Task** | ***n*** | **Mean** | **Not confident** | **Slightly confident** | **Moderately confident** | **Confident** | **Very confident** |
| **Direct Action (DA)** | 291 | 3.87 [a] | 10% | 7% | 11% | 32% | 41% |
| **Special Reconnaissance (SR)** | 281 | 4.07 [b] | 6% | 7% | 8% | 31% | 48% |
| **Foreign Internal Defense (FID)** | 321 | 2.21 [a, b, c] | 41% | 22% | 18% | 11% | 7% |
| **Unconventional Warfare (UW)** | 298 | 2.12 [a, b, d] | 46% | 20% | 17% | 9% | 7% |
| **Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)** | 294 | 2.02 [a, b c] | 46% | 25% | 15% | 9% | 5% |
| **Military Information Support (MISO)** | 293 | 1.88 [a, b, c, d] | 55% | 21% | 11% | 9% | 5% |
| **Overall** | 336 | 2.49 | 27% | 26% | 24% | 16% | 7% |

*Note.* a) SOF leaders were more confident in their unit's ability to carry out direct action (DA) than foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare (UW), civil affairs operations (CAO), and military information support operations (MISO) without an interpreter.

b) SOF leaders were more confident in their unit's ability to carry out special reconnaissance (SR) than FID, UW, CAO, and MISO without an interpreter.

c) SOF leaders were more confident in their unit's ability to carry out FID than CAO and MISO.

d) SOF leaders were more confident in their unit's ability to carry out UW than MISO without an interpreter.

1 = *Not confident*, 2 = *Slightly confident*, 3 = *Moderately confident*, 4 = *Confident*, 5 = *Very confident*

## SECTION IV: PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH USING INTERPRETERS

SOF operators rely heavily on interpreters for mission success on inside and outside AOR deployments. However, in some cases, this high reliance can be detrimental to mission success because of issues with interpreters. Some of these issues are minor, but others can compromise missions. There are many potential issues related to using interpreters on missions: 1) interpreters saving face by concealing a lack of understanding, 2) interpreter availability, and 3) interpreters compromising mission outcomes. This section explores these problems.

**Research Questions**

This section addresses the following questions:
- How often have SOF operators encountered situations where an interpreter attempted to save face by purposefully concealing a lack of understanding?
- How often have SOF operators encountered situations where not enough interpreters were available?
- How often have SOF operators encountered situations where interpreters compromised the mission outcome?
- Do SOF operators receive pre-deployment training on how to use an interpreter? If so, how effective is the training?

**Main Findings**

SOF operators faced several challenges when using interpreters on missions. Fortunately, SOF operators and leaders did not report a high frequency of situations where interpreters "saved face" by purposefully concealing a lack of understanding or where interpreters compromised the mission outcome. However, respondents indicated a shortage of interpreters available to SOF operators during deployment. Open-ended comments suggested this was a frequent issue with CAT II/III interpreters.

There is a disconnect between SOF operator and leader perceptions of pre-deployment training received on using interpreters. Specifically, 42% of SOF operators indicated that they received training and 59% of SOF leaders indicated that their units received training. This suggests that SOF leaders may not be providing sufficient training resources, but think that they are. Additionally, the lack of training suggests that many SOF operators may not be utilizing interpreters effectively on their missions. Most SOF operators who received training found it effective. However, only 29% of those who did not receive training thought it would be *useful* or *very useful*, indicating that SOF operators might not realize the potential benefits of receiving training or that they have little confidence that the training would be aligned with mission requirements and/or effectively designed and delivered. Differences existed among Army SOF types.

**Detailed Findings**

*Interpreters saving face by concealing lack of understanding*

Overall, SOF operators reported that interpreters *sometimes* "save face" by purposefully concealing their lack of understanding with the conversation at hand (Figure 8, p. 49). On a positive note, nearly half (49%) of SOF operators reported they *never* or *seldom* encountered these situations. Only 11% of SOF operators encountered this situation *often* or *very often.*

*Figure 8.* Frequency of Interpreters Saving Face to Conceal Lack of Understanding
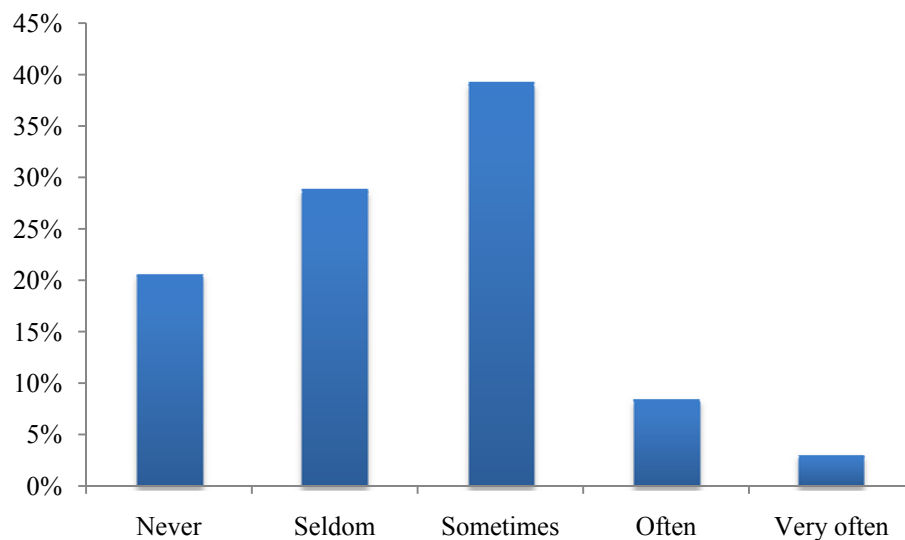


*Note.* SOF leaders were not asked this question. Total *n* = 1,055. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Interpreter availability*

Both SOF operators and leaders indicated a shortage of interpreters available to SOF operators during deployments (Figure 9, p. 50). Thirty-eight percent of SOF operators encountered situations where not enough interpreters were available, and 49% of SOF leaders indicated their units experienced this type of situation.

*Figure 9*. Frequency of Situations Where not Enough Interpreters were Available
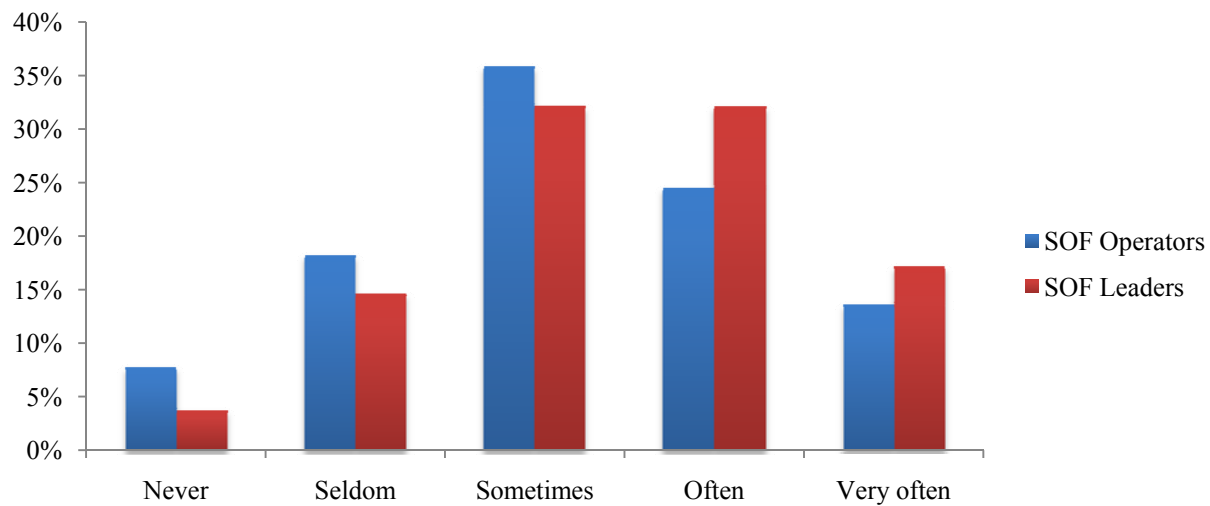


*Note*.  SOF Leader: Total *n* = 348, *M* = 3.45, *SD* = 1.06. SOF Operator: *n* = 1,056, *M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.12.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

The shortage of interpreters was also expressed in open-ended survey comments.  As one SOF operator succinctly stated,

> *"We need more of them."*
>
>                                          SOF Operator, Deployed SO Unit or Element

The interpreter shortage was more apparent in regards to CAT II/III interpreters.  According to one SOF leader,

> *"We need more!  OPSEC requirements for sensitive missions and TTPs are mandating we have more of them for mission accomplishment."*
>
>                                          SOF Leader, 1st SFG

One potential problem with the lack of interpreters in the SOF community is that SOF operators rely on interpreters of poor quality when no other options available.  As one SOF operator stated,

> *"The lack of interpreters has lead to many individuals being hired that are of very poor quality.  More training for operators could reduce the need, and risk of in using these interpreters."*
>
>                                          SOF Operator, USAJFKSWCS

*Interpreters compromising mission outcome*

Most SOF operators (70%) *never* or *seldom* encountered situations where an interpreter compromised the mission outcome, while very few SOF operators (8%) *often* or *very often* encountered these situations (Figure 10, p. 51).  Most SOF leaders (71%) reported that their unit *never* or *seldom* encountered

situations where an interpreter compromised the mission outcome, while few SOF leaders (6%) reported that their unit had encountered these situations *often* or *very often*.

*Figure 10.* Frequency of Situations Where Interpreter Compromised Mission Outcome
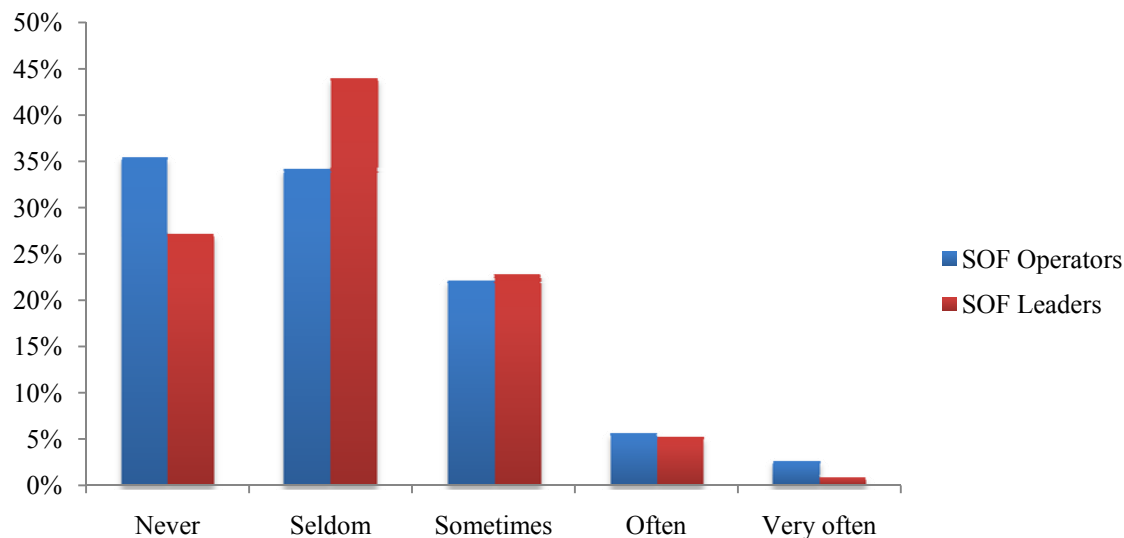


*Note*. SOF leader: Total $n$ = 343, $M$ = 2.09, $SD$ = 0.88.  SOF operator: Total $n$ = 1,052, $M$ = 2.06, $SD$ = 1.02.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Pre-deployment training on interpreter use*

Despite the frequent use of interpreters, few SOF operators received pre-deployment training on how to use an interpreter (Figure 11, p. 52).  Less than half of SOF operators (42%) received pre-deployment training on the use of interpreters, while a slightly larger proportion of SOF leaders (59%) reported that their unit received pre-deployment training.  This indicates a disconnect between SOF operators' and leaders' perceptions of whether use of interpreter training was received.  SOF leaders may not be providing sufficient training resources, but think that they are.  SOF leadership should evaluate whether sufficient training is occurring.  Furthermore, this lack of pre-deployment interpreter training suggests that many SOF operators may not be utilizing interpreters effectively on their missions.

*Figure 11.* Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training
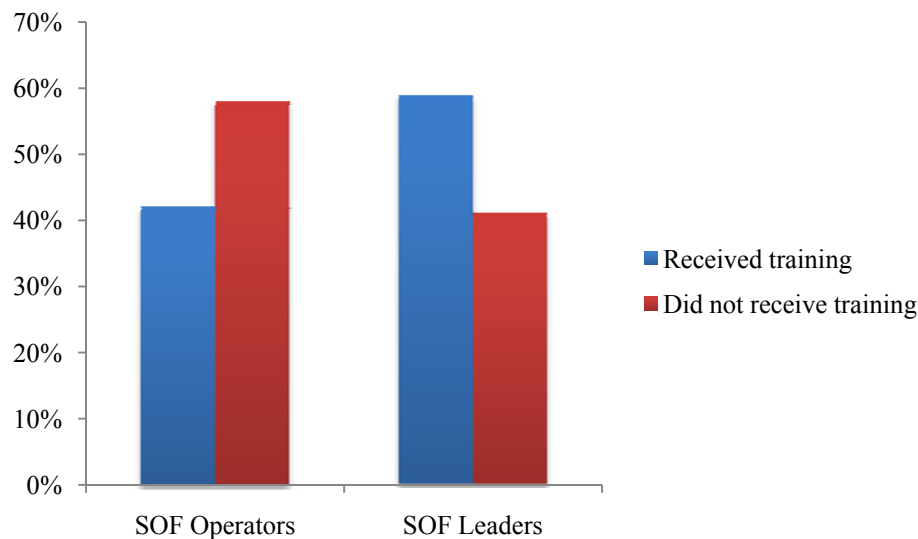
*Note.* SOF leader *n* = 355, SOF operator *n* = 1,081.

Across SOF organizations, Army SOF types and USASOC units, there were some striking differences regarding pre-deployment interpreter training (Tables 32 and 33, p. 53). For example, only 54% of TSOC operators received pre-deployment interpreter training, while 73% of MARSOC operators received training. Among the four SOF components (AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, and USASOC), there were notable differences. The majority of MARSOC operators (73%) reported receiving pre-deployment interpreter training, while less than half of USASOC operators (43%) reported receiving training. However, sample sizes for MARSOC, AFSOC, and WARCOM were small, so these findings should be interpreted with caution.

There were differences across Army SOF types as well. For example, 74% of CA operators received pre-deployment interpreter training, while only 28% of SF operators received training. SF groups, in general, did not receive pre-deployment interpreter training. For example, only 14% of 10th SFG and 21% of 20th SFG received pre-deployment interpreter training. On the other hand, 63% of 4th MISG and 73% of 95th CA Bde received pre-deployment interpreter training.

Similar differences were observed among SOF leaders. There were significant differences across SOF organizations and Army SOF types (Table 34, p. 54). For example, 67% of USSOCOM HQ leaders reported that their unit received pre-deployment interpreter training, while only 21% of TSOC leaders reported their unit receiving this training. Across Army SOF types, 90% of CA leaders reported that their unit received pre-deployment interpreter training, while 56% of SF leaders reported that their unit received this training. Although there were some differences observed amongst USASOC units, differences were not statistically significant (Table 35, p. 54).

*Table 32.* SOF Operators' Reported Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | Received Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 122 | 33% | 67% |
| **AFSOC** | 9 | 56% | 44% |
| **MARSOC** | 15 | 73% | 27% |
| **WARCOM** | 9 | 44% | 56% |
| **USASOC** | 785 | 43% | 57% |
| *CA* | 145 | 74% | 26% |
| *MISG* | 139 | 63% | 37% |
| *SF* | 491 | 28% | 72% |
| **JSOC** | 2 | 100% | 0% |
| **TSOC** | 13 | 54% | 46% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 54 | 28% | 72% |
| **Other** | 63 | 54% | 46% |

*Note.* CA operators responded 'Yes' significantly more than SF operators ($\chi^2 = 99.70$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). CA operators responded 'Yes' significantly more than MISG operators ($\chi^2 = 4.12$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$). MISG operators responded 'Yes' significantly more than SF operators ($\chi^2 = 56.89$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$).

*Table 33.* SOF Operators' Reported Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training by USASOC Unit

| | | Received Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 4 | 25% | 75% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 28 | 43% | 57% |
| **4th MISG** | 134 | 63% | 37% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 138 | 73% | 27% |
| **1st SFG** | 69 | 30% | 70% |
| **3rd SFG** | 82 | 28% | 72% |
| **5th SFG** | 138 | 36% | 64% |
| **7th SFG** | 95 | 25% | 75% |
| **10th SFG** | 57 | 14% | 86% |
| **19th SFG** | 8 | 13% | 87% |
| **20th SFG** | 14 | 21% | 79% |

*Note.* 4th MISG and 95th CA Bde responded 'Yes' significantly more than all SF units (e.g., 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, etc.)

*Table 34.* SOF Leaders' Reported Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training by SOF Organization

| | | Unit Received Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 36 | 67% | 33% |
| **AFSOC** | 2 | 100% | 0% |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 60% | 40% |
| **WARCOM** | 3 | 0% | 100% |
| **USASOC** | 232 | 63% | 37% |
| *CA* | 21 | 90% | 10% |
| *MISG* | 26 | 77% | 23% |
| *SF* | 163 | 56% | 44% |
| **JSOC** | 1 | 100% | 0% |
| **TSOC** | 24 | 21% | 79% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 31 | 48% | 52% |
| **Other** | 21 | 67% | 33% |

*Note.* CA leaders responded 'Yes' significantly more than SF leaders ($\chi^2 = 9.00$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$). MISG leaders responded 'Yes" significantly more than SF leaders ($\chi^2 = 3.90$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$).

*Table 35.* SOF Leaders' Reported Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training by USASOC Unit

| | | Unit Received Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **USASOC HQ** | 7 | 57% | 43% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 7 | 71% | 29% |
| **4th MISG** | 26 | 77% | 23% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 21 | 90% | 10% |
| **1st SFG** | 21 | 43% | 57% |
| **3rd SFG** | 29 | 45% | 55% |
| **5th SFG** | 57 | 75% | 25% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 53% | 47% |
| **10th SFG** | 26 | 50% | 50% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 40% | 60% |
| **20th SFG** | 3 | 33% | 67% |

*Note.* Differences were not statistically significant.

Of the SOF operators who received pre-deployment interpreter training, nearly half (48%) stated that the training was *effective* or *very effective* (Figure 12, p. 55). A similar percentage of SOF leaders (47%) indicated that the pre-deployment interpreter training their unit received was *effective* or *very effective.* Few SOF operators (17%) and leaders (20%) indicated the training received was *not effective* or *slightly effective.*

*Figure 12.* Effectiveness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training
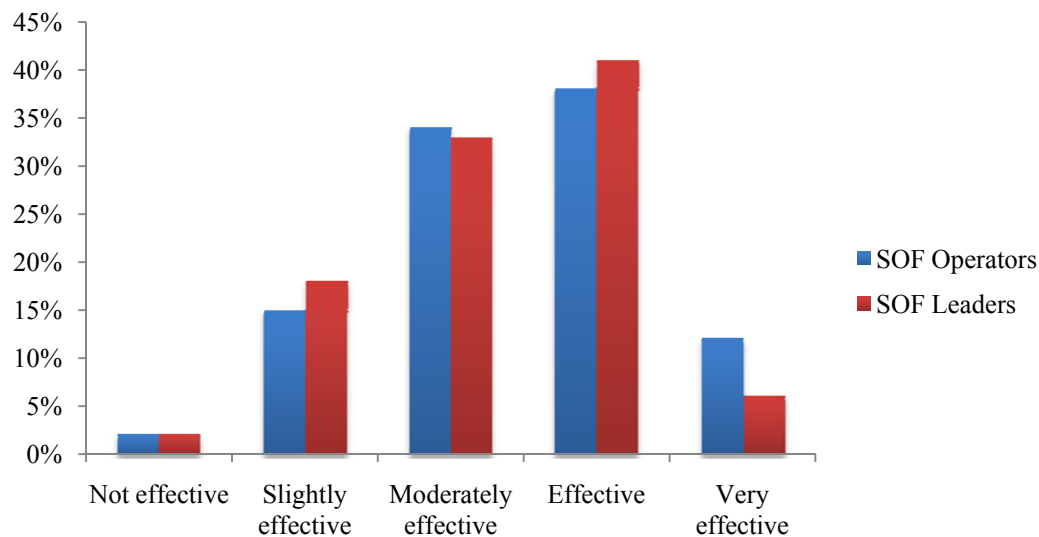


*Note*. SOF leader: Total *n* = 208, *M* = 3.31, *SD* = 0.92. SOF operator: Total *n* = 451, *M* = 3.42, *SD* = 0.94. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

Open-ended comments provide insight into the pre-deployment interpreter training received by SOF operators. A large number of comments indicated that the training was effective. As stated by one SOF operator,

> *"Very effective training. Team overall felt at ease when talking with the different officials and locals through the interpreter. Always looking at the individual and knowing how to tell the interpreter what was expected of him during meetings was key."*
>
> SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Furthermore, many SOF operators cited specific techniques for using interpreters that they learned during pre-deployment interpreter training. For example, one SOF operator discussed a learned technique he later found effective on a mission,

> *"I was made aware of several habits and tendencies frequently seen while using an interpreter, such as the communicator speaking to the interpreter instead of to the other party. Knowing this helped me be respectful from the start and not make any of the same mistakes."*
>
> SOF Operator, 4th MISG

A small number of SOF operators and leaders felt that the pre-deployment interpreter training was ineffective. In general, many SOF operators did not feel that the pre-deployment interpreter training was sufficient to meet their needs on deployment. As stated by one SOF operator,

> *"I do not feel that 2 hours of training in a year prepared me, or my team for 24hour reliance on an interpreter"*
>
> SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Some SOF operators and leaders offered suggestions for improving pre-deployment interpreter training. A frequent suggestion was the inclusion of role-plays and practice using interpreters as indicated by these SOF operators,

> *"lack of hands on, role playing scenarios limited the effectiveness of the training."*
>
> SOF Operator, Other SOF Organization

> *"Received a briefing. Could have used some practice experience."*
>
> SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Several SOF operators and leaders reported that there was no formal pre-deployment interpreter training received. According to one SOF operator,

> *"Training as I am calling it has been acquired by myself through numerous years in SOF and numerous training courses. I have never received formal 'How to use an interpreter' training. My training comes from the Q-Course, ASOT, SERE, personal experience and NCOPD or water cooler discussions."*
>
> SOF Operator, 7th SFG

SOF operators who did not receive pre-deployment interpreter training and SOF leaders whose units did not receive training commented on how effective or useful they thought pre-deployment interpreter training would be (Figures 13 and 14, p. 57). Half (51%) of SOF operators reported that receiving pre-deployment interpreter training would either not have been useful or only slightly useful, while only 29% indicated that it would have been useful or very useful. Among SOF leaders, only 40% of leaders felt that having their SOF operators receive pre-deployment interpreter training would have been either not effective or only slightly effective, while 38% of SOF leaders indicated that it would have been effective or very effective.

*Figure 13.* Potential Usefulness/Effectiveness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training
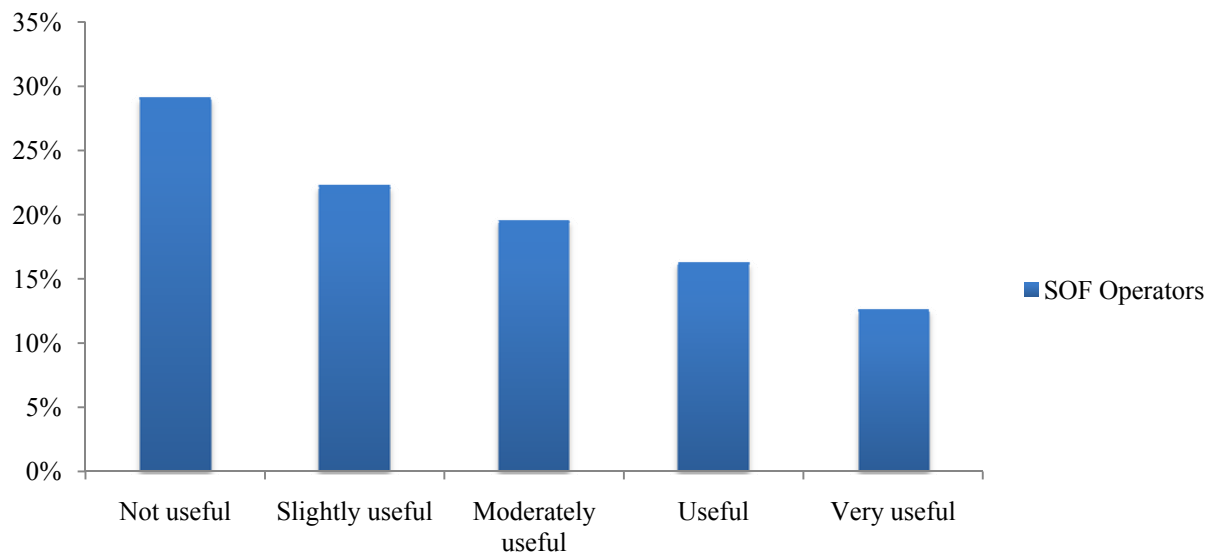


*Note*. SOF operator: Total *n* = 624, *M* = 2.61, *SD* = 2.61. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Figure 14.* Potential Effectiveness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training
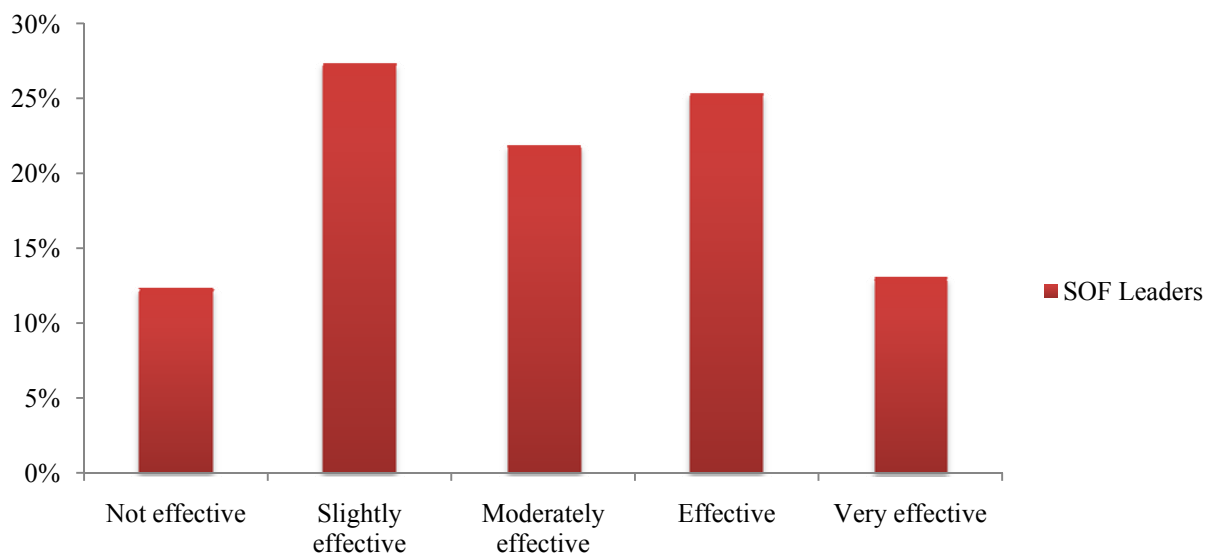


*Note*. SOF leader: Total *n* = 146, *M* = 2.99, *SD* = 1.25. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

There were significant SOF operator subgroup differences regarding the potential usefulness of pre-deployment interpreter training across Army SOF types (Table 36, p. 59) and USASOC units (Table 37, p. 60). CA and MISG operators rated the potential usefulness of pre-deployment interpreter training significantly higher than SF operators. Across USASOC units, 4th MISG operators rated the potential usefulness of the training significantly higher than 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG operators. Similarly,

95th CA Bde operators rated the potential usefulness of pre-deployment interpreter training significantly higher than 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, 7th SFG, and 10th SFG operators.  20th SFG operators thought the training would be more useful than 3rd SFG and 10th SFG operators.  There were no significant SOF leader differences.  One possible implication of these findings is that CA and MISG operators may need to use their interpreters for more strategic-level missions, and thus, would find training on how to use interpreters more strategically useful in meeting their future mission requirements.

*Table 36.* Potential Usefulness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training: SOF Operators by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

**Potential Usefulness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training**

| Group | *n* | Mean | Not useful | Slightly useful | Moderately useful | Useful | Very useful |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 80 | 2.51 | 36% | 20% | 16% | 11% | 16% |
| **WARCOM** | 5 | 3.40 | 0% | 20% | 40% | 20% | 20% |
| **USASOC** | 450 | 2.59 | 29% | 23% | 19% | 17% | 12% |
| *CA* | 37 | 3.70 [a] | 11% | 5% | 19% | 32% | 32% |
| *MISG* | 52 | 3.33 [a] | 8% | 21% | 19% | 35% | 17% |
| *SF* | 354 | 2.35 [a] | 35% | 25% | 19% | 13% | 8% |
| **TSOC** | 6 | 3.50 | 17% | 0% | 17% | 50% | 17% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 39 | 2.39 | 33% | 26% | 18% | 15% | 8% |
| **Other** | 29 | 2.76 | 21% | 24% | 28% | 14% | 14% |

*Note.*  a) SF operators felt that pre-deployment interpreter training would be less useful as compared to CA and MISG operators.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, MARSOC, JSOC) were omitted.

Army SOF types were not compared with SOF organizations.

1 = *Not useful,* 2 = *Slightly useful,* 3 = *Moderately useful,* 4 = *Useful,* 5 = *Very useful*

*Table 37.* Potential Usefulness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training: SOF Operators by USASOC Unit

| | | | Potential Usefulness of Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | *n* | Mean | Not useful | Slightly useful | Moderately useful | Useful | Very useful |
| SWCS-Staff | 16 | 2.63 | 19% | 44% | 0% | 31% | 6% |
| 4th MISG | 50 | 3.30 [a] | 8% | 22% | 20% | 32% | 18% |
| 95th CA Bde | 36 | 3.69 [b] | 11% | 6% | 19% | 31% | 33% |
| 1st SFG | 48 | 2.35 [b] | 33% | 25% | 23% | 10% | 8% |
| 3rd SFG | 59 | 1.90 [a,b,c] | 44% | 27% | 25% | 2% | 2% |
| 5th SFG | 88 | 2.26 [a,b] | 42% | 20% | 13% | 19% | 6% |
| 7th SFG | 71 | 2.65 [b] | 31% | 18% | 20% | 17% | 14% |
| 10th SFG | 49 | 2.14 [a,b,c] | 37% | 29% | 24% | 4% | 6% |
| 19th SFG | 7 | 3.57 | 0% | 29% | 14% | 29% | 29% |
| 20th SFG | 11 | 3.64 [c] | 0% | 9% | 36% | 36% | 18% |

*Note.* a) 4th MISG rated potential usefulness of pre-deployment training higher than 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG.
b) 95th CA Bde rated potential usefulness of pre-deployment interpreter training higher than 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, 7th SFG, and 10th SFG.
c) 20th SFG rated potential usefulness of pre-deployment interpreter training higher than 3rd SFG and 10th SFG.
Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ) were omitted.
1 = *Not useful*, 2 = *Slightly useful*, 3 = *Moderately useful*, 4 = *Useful*, 5 = *Very useful*

**SECTION V: COMPARISON OF CAT I AND CAT II/III INTERPRETERS**

As the previous sections have shown, SOF operators rely heavily on interpreters while on deployment. It is important to determine the frequency with which specific types of interpreters are used[6] and to ascertain and document any issues related to trust or competence associated with using different types of interpreters.  There are three different types of interpreters that SOF operators typically use: CAT I, CAT II/III, or 09L.  CAT I interpreters are either local hires or US citizens who have not been vetted, while CAT II/III interpreters are US citizens who are native speakers of the target language and have either a Secret or a Top Secret clearance.  09Ls (U.S. Army natives or heritage speakers of certain Middle-Eastern languages) are available to some Army SOF units, but due to their limited use by SOF operators, they will not be discussed in this report (for information on 09Ls, see *09L Use in the SOF Community,* Technical Report #2010011014).

**Research Questions**

This section addresses the following questions across deployments (i.e., inside and outside the AOR):
- What are SOF operators' experiences with CAT I interpreters?
  - How frequently do SOF operators use CAT I interpreters?
  - How trustworthy are CAT I interpreters?
  - How competent are CAT I interpreters?
- What are SOF operators' experiences with CAT II/III interpreters?
  - How frequently do SOF operators use CAT II/III interpreters?
  - How trustworthy are CAT II/III interpreters?
  - How competent are CAT II/III interpreters?
- Are SOF operators and leaders confident in interpreters' ability to convey information?
- What type(s) of interpreters have SOF operators used on missions?
- What type (s) of interpreters do SOF operators and leaders prefer to use on missions

**Main Findings**

Both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters are used frequently, but CAT II/III interpreters were viewed as more trustworthy, competent and as having a greater ability to convey information.  Although SOF operators and leaders had experience with both types of interpreters, most preferred to use CAT II/III interpreters or indicated that the type of interpreter that was preferred depended on the mission type. It is clear from comments provided that there are advantages and disadvantages to using each type of interpreter. The advantages of using CAT I interpreters included knowledge of local area/dialect, while the disadvantages included lack of trust and perceived competence.  The advantages of using CAT II/III interpreters included greater competence and trustworthiness, while the disadvantages included a lack of knowledge of local dialect and customs, and less usefulness in combat.

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[6] This section focuses on general (i.e., across all deployments both inside and outside the AOR) experiences with interpreters.

**Detailed Findings**

*Frequency of CAT I interpreter use*

Most SOF operators (66%) used CAT I interpreters *often* or *very often*; similarly, 73% of SOF leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT I interpreters *often* or *very often* (Figure 15, p. 62).  There were no significant differences by SOF organization or Army SOF type (Appendix H, Table 1).  There were significant differences by USASOC unit (Table 38, p. 63).  Specifically, 4th MISG operators used CAT I interpreters less often than 3rd SFG and 7th SFG operators.  Furthermore, 3rd SFG operators used CAT I interpreters more often than 5th SFG operators, while 7th SFG operators used CAT I interpreters more often than 5th SFG operators.

For SOF leaders, there were significant differences by SOF organization and Army SOF type (Table 39, p. 64) and USASOC unit (Table 40, p. 65).  Across SOF organizations, TSOC leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT I interpreters less often than SOF leaders from USSOCOM Headquarters, USASOC, and Deployed SO Units.  Additionally, MISG leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT I interpreters less often than CA and SF.  For units within USASOC, 4th MISG leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT I interpreters less often than 3rd SFG and 5th SFG.

*Figure 15.* Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use
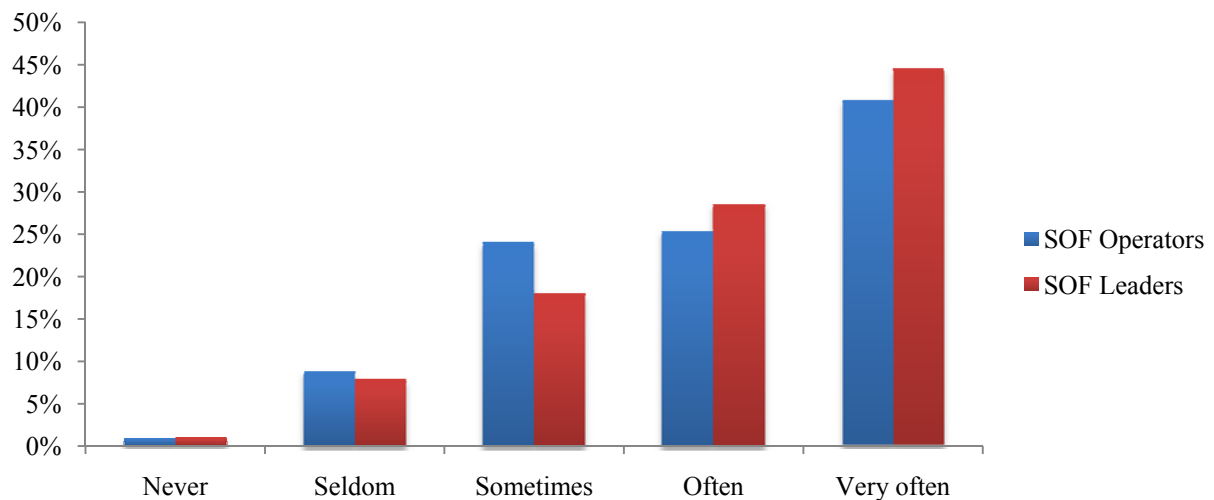


*Note*.  SOF leader: Total $n = 305$, $M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.01$.  SOF operator: Total $n = 841$, $M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.04$.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Table 38.* Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit: SOF Operators

| Group | *n* | Mean | Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 22 | 4.05 | 0% | 9% | 18% | 32% | 41% |
| **4th MISG** | 78 | 3.78 [a] | 0% | 14% | 24% | 31% | 31% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 113 | 3.97 | 1% | 7% | 26% | 27% | 40% |
| **1st SFG** | 61 | 3.84 | 3% | 5% | 30% | 30% | 33% |
| **3rd SFG** | 71 | 4.35 [a,b] | 0% | 1% | 20% | 21% | 58% |
| **5th SFG** | 108 | 3.66 [b] | 1% | 12% | 33% | 28% | 26% |
| **7th SFG** | 81 | 4.38 [a,b] | 1% | 2% | 11% | 27% | 58% |
| **10th SFG** | 46 | 3.80 | 0% | 11% | 26% | 35% | 28% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 4.00 | 0% | 0% | 40% | 20% | 40% |
| **20th SFG** | 12 | 4.25 | 0% | 8% | 8% | 33% | 50% |

*Note.* a) 4th MISG used CAT I interpreters less than 3rd SFG and 7th SFG.

b) 5th SFG used CAT I interpreters less than 3rd SFG and 7th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 39.* Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use by SOF Organization: SOF Leaders

| | | | Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | *n* | Mean | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 29 | 4.28 [b] | 0% | 10% | 10% | 21% | 59% |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 3.80 | 0% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 40% |
| **USASOC** | 212 | 4.11 [b] | 1% | 8% | 17% | 27% | 47% |
| *CA* | 18 | 4.28 [a] | 0% | 6% | 11% | 33% | 50% |
| *MISG* | 21 | 3.38 [a] | 0% | 19% | 33% | 38% | 10% |
| *SF* | 155 | 4.22 [a] | 1% | 6% | 15% | 26% | 52% |
| **TSOC** | 17 | 3.18 [b] | 6% | 18% | 41% | 23% | 12% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 23 | 4.22 [b] | 0% | 0% | 17% | 43% | 39% |
| **Other** | 14 | 4.07 | 0% | 0% | 21% | 50% | 29% |

*Note.*  a) MISG used CAT I interpreters less than CA and SF

b) TSOC used CAT I interpreters less than Deployed SO Units, USSOCOM HQ, and USASOC

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted.

Comparisons were not made between Army SOF types and other SOF organizations (e.g., MARSOC, TSOC).

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 40.* Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit: SOF Leaders

| Group | *n* | Mean | Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 3.17 | 0% | 50% | 17% | 0% | 33% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 6 | 4.00 | 0% | 0% | 33% | 33% | 33% |
| **4th MISG** | 21 | 3.38 [a] | 0% | 19% | 33% | 38% | 10% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 18 | 4.28 | 0% | 6% | 11% | 33% | 50% |
| **1st SFG** | 20 | 3.75 | 0% | 10% | 35% | 25% | 30% |
| **3rd SFG** | 28 | 4.39 [a] | 7% | 4% | 4% | 14% | 71% |
| **5th SFG** | 56 | 4.27 [a] | 0% | 5% | 14% | 29% | 52% |
| **7th SFG** | 16 | 4.50 | 0% | 0% | 12% | 25% | 63% |
| **10th SFG** | 24 | 4.21 | 0% | 4% | 17% | 33% | 46% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 4.40 | 0% | 20% | 0% | 0% | 80% |

*Note.* a) 4th MISG used CAT I interpreters less than 3rd SFG and 5th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Trustworthiness of CAT I interpreters*

Thirty-seven percent of SOF operators and 42% of SOF leaders indicated that CAT I interpreters were *moderately trustworthy* (Figure 16, p. 66). This is unsurprising, given that CAT I interpreters are local hires or non-vetted individuals.

*Figure 16.* Trustworthiness of CAT I interpreters
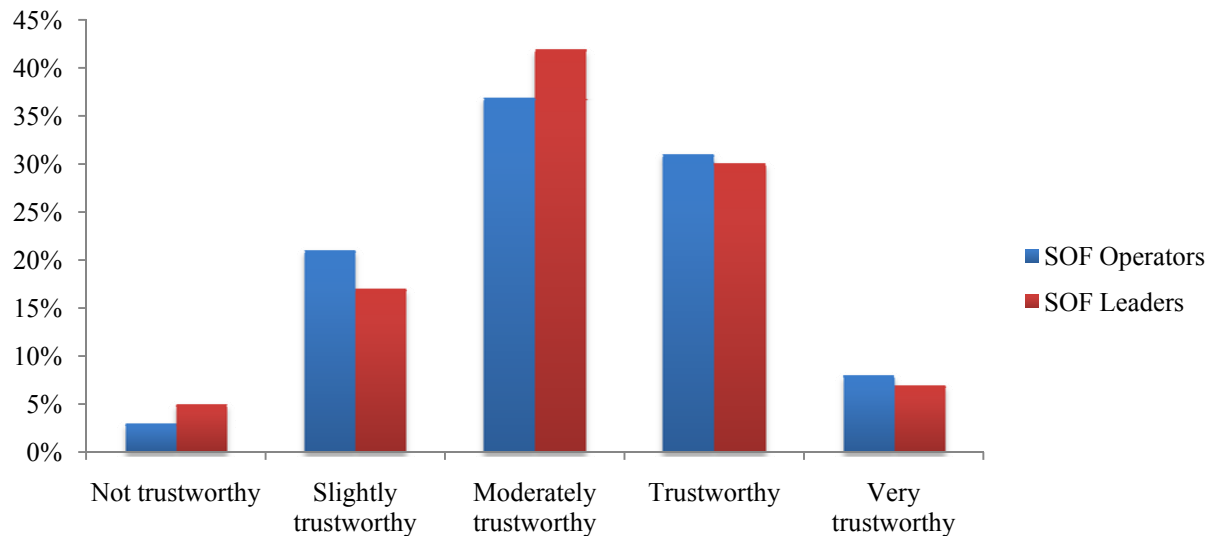


*Note.* SOF leader: Total $n = 302$, $M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.95$. SOF operator: Total $n = 839$, $M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.97$. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

Consistent with quantitative findings, 29% of open-ended survey comments or recommendations regarding CAT I interpreters were related to either trust/security concerns or the informal screening process. As one SOF operator stated:

> *"CAT 1 Terps in a SOF environment is like playing with fire, you need them but you can get burned very easily if you're not OPSEC minded."*
>
> SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Several comments included examples of CAT I interpreters being untrustworthy. For example,

> *"Worked with one and later learned he had phone contact with enemy, would avoid use of CAT I if possible."*
>
> SOF Operator, Deployed SO Unit or Element

One focus group participant revealed,

> *"…we've had instances where our interpreter was playing sides. And whoever gave him the most money, he would end up going that way."*
>
> SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

To offset some of the security concerns inherent in using CAT I interpreters, SOF operators and leaders recommended more stringent informal screening procedures.  As one SOF operator said,

> *"Do as much background check as possible. Find out where they learned English, how much do they know. When interviewing, hold a practical exercise with the interpreter."*
>
> SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Additionally, several SOF operators discussed hiding the language proficiency level of their most proficient tactical element member in order to "vet" the interpreter.  This allowed the SOF operator to screen the interpreter's translations and assess his trustworthiness.

SOF operators and leaders also suggested that, to maintain operational security (OPSEC), CAT I interpreters should be exposed to limited information.  According to one SOF leader,

> *"The use of any third party interpreter is going to pose a risk to OPSEC; therefore, mitigating measures must be emplaced that fit the tactical operational environment to preserve the integrity of the operation. The operators on the ground are most apt to determine those measures and implement them, more direction from higher is the last thing they need."*
>
> SOF Staff Officer, USSOCOM Headquarters

*Competence of CAT I interpreters*

Thirty-four percent of SOF operators and 39% of SOF leaders rated CAT I interpreters as *moderately competent* (Figure 17, p. 68).

*Figure 17.* Competence of CAT I Interpreters
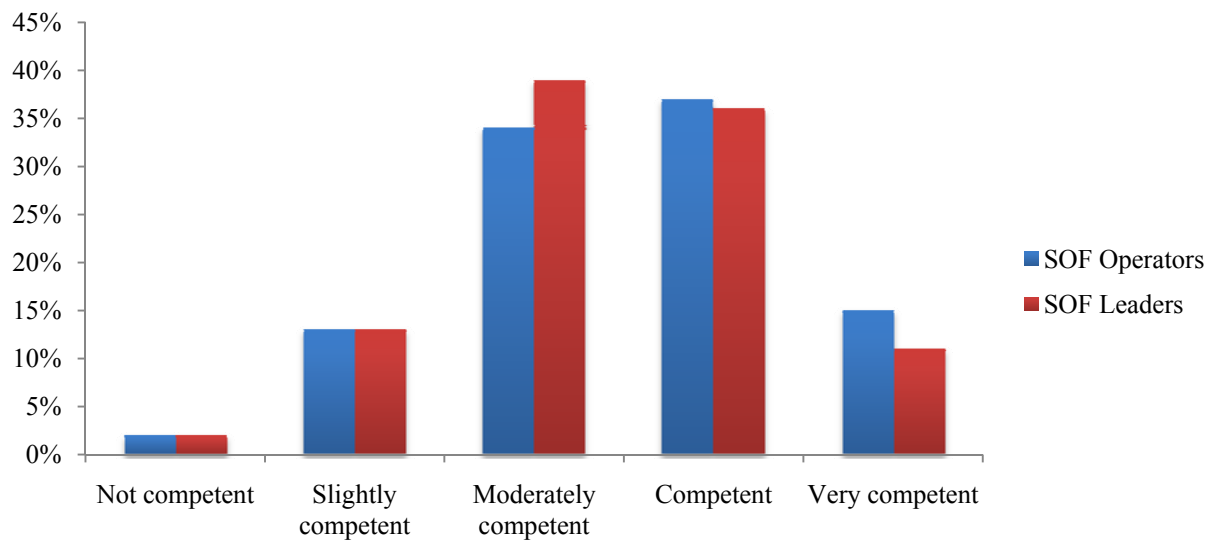


*Note.* SOF leader: Total $n$ = 303, $M$ = 3.41, $SD$ = 0.91.  SOF operator: Total $n$ = 835, $M$ = 3.51, $SD$ = 0.95.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

CAT I interpreters often hold knowledge of the local area and/or region that are helpful in conducting missions.  This advantage was noted by one SOF operator:

> *"The CAT 1 interpreters I have encountered are very knowledgeable and very passionate about their occupation.  CAT 1 interpreters are very proficient in reading, writing and understanding the different cultures and provinces around the area."*
>
> SOF Operator, 4th MISG

However, SOF operators and leaders suggested that CAT I interpreters were not competent because of a lack of English proficiency or a lack of local language proficiency.  This theme appeared throughout the open-ended comments.  As one SOF operator noted,

> *"The language barrier sometimes affected the outcomes of a meeting, etc. Words would get lost during the translations. This was because some of the words the interpreter did not understand and was not able to translate. This was due to the shortage of CAT II & III interpreters no being allotted to my team during that deployment."*
>
> SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Although CAT I interpreters are generally hired from the local vicinity, SOF operators and leaders stated that regional dialects were sometimes an issue.  One SOF leader commented,

> *"There is always a question of dialects and the pronouncing/meaning of the word(s) content/usage, which causes the greatest of problems."*
>
> SOF Leader, 4th MISG

In addition to the English and target language issues, many SOF operators and leaders discussed the interpreter's lack of military knowledge and terminology as a mission barrier.

> *"They were great for FID training.  The only difficulty was understanding certain military terms."*

<div align="right">SOF Operator, USAJFKSWCS Staff</div>

> *"The problem with the use my CAT I interpreters was the lack of military knowledge in our profession. I would recommend that those interpreters participate with a pre-mission training with the assigned organization they will work with on missions."*

<div align="right">SOF Operator, 10th SFG</div>

*Frequency of CAT II/III interpreter use*

The majority of SOF operators (66%) used CAT II/III interpreters *often* or *very often* and 73% of SOF leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT II/III interpreters *often* or *very often* (Figure 18, p. 69).  There were subgroup differences regarding CAT II/III interpreter use for SOF operators and leaders. For SOF operators, there were significant differences by SOF type (Table 41, p. 71) and USASOC unit (Table 42, p. 72).  There were no significant differences across SOF organizations for SOF operators (Table 41, p. 71).  Specifically, MISG and SF operators used CAT II/III interpreters more often than CA operators.  Across USASOC units, 95th CA Bde operators used CAT II/III interpreters less often than 4th MISG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG operators.

*Figure 18.*  Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use
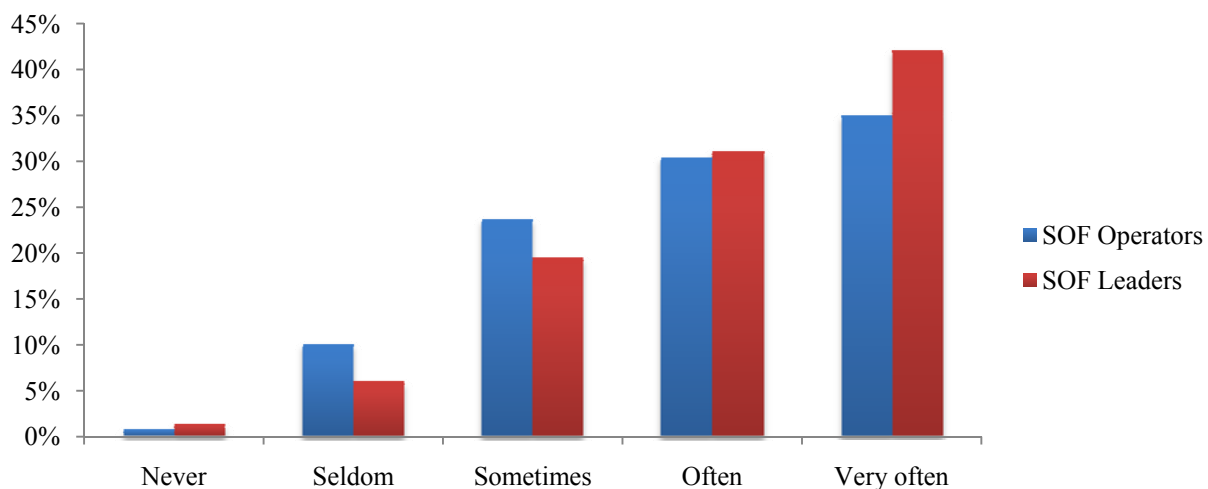


*Note*.  SOF leader: Total $n$ = 318, $M$ = 4.07, $SD$ = 0.98.  SOF operator: Total $n$ = 864, $M$ = 3.89, $SD$ = 1.02.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

For SOF leaders, there were significant differences by Army SOF type (Table 43, p. 73) and USASOC unit (Table 44, p. 74).  There were no significant differences across SOF organizations for SOF leaders

(Table 43, p. 73).  Specifically, CA and MISG leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT II/III interpreters less often than SF.  Additionally, 10$^{th}$ SFG leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT II/III interpreters more often than 4$^{th}$ MISG, 1$^{st}$ SFG, and 95$^{th}$ CA Bde.  Furthermore, 95$^{th}$ CA Bde leaders indicated that their SOF operators used CAT II/III interpreters less often than 5$^{th}$ SFG and 10$^{th}$ SFG.  Interestingly, SOF leaders ($M = 4.07$) reported significantly higher levels of CAT II/III interpreter use in their units than SOF operators ($M = 3.89$) self-reported use.

*Table 41.* Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type: SOF Operators

| | | | Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 93 | 3.95 | 0% | 10% | 19% | 38% | 33% |
| **AFSOC** | 5 | 3.40 | 0% | 0% | 60% | 40% | 0% |
| **MARSOC** | 7 | 3.71 | 0% | 14% | 29% | 29% | 29% |
| **WARCOM** | 8 | 4.50 | 0% | 0% | 13% | 25% | 63% |
| **USASOC** | 628 | 3.88 | 1% | 11% | 23% | 31% | 35% |
| *CA* | 101 | 3.39 [a] | 0% | 26% | 30% | 25% | 20% |
| *MISG* | 115 | 4.10 [a] | 2% | 4% | 20% | 30% | 44% |
| *SF* | 405 | 3.95 [a] | 1% | 8% | 22% | 32% | 36% |
| **TSOC** | 13 | 3.69 | 0% | 0% | 46% | 38% | 15% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 47 | 4.11 | 0% | 11% | 17% | 23% | 49% |
| **Other** | 54 | 3.83 | 0% | 9% | 35% | 19% | 37% |

*Note.* a) CA used CAT II/III interpreters less than MISG and SF

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., JSOC) were omitted.

Comparisons were not made between Army SOF types and other SOF organizations (e.g., MARSOC, TSOC).

1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Table 42.* Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit: SOF Operators

| | | | Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 22 | 3.96 | 0% | 5% | 27% | 36% | 32% |
| **4th MISG** | 111 | 4.10 [a] | 2% | 5% | 21% | 28% | 45% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 97 | 3.40 [a] | 0% | 26% | 29% | 25% | 21% |
| **1st SFG** | 50 | 3.70 | 2% | 10% | 34% | 24% | 30% |
| **3rd SFG** | 64 | 3.91 | 0% | 13% | 20% | 31% | 36% |
| **5th SFG** | 125 | 4.11 [a] | 1% | 6% | 16% | 37% | 41% |
| **7th SFG** | 74 | 3.70 | 1% | 12% | 30% | 28% | 28% |
| **10th SFG** | 52 | 4.17 [a] | 2% | 2% | 15% | 38% | 42% |
| **20th SFG** | 13 | 3.77 | 0% | 15% | 23% | 31% | 31% |

*Note.* a) 95th CA Bde used CAT II/III interpreters less than 4th MISG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 19th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Never,* 2 = *Seldom,* 3 = *Sometimes,* 4 = *Often,* 5 = *Very often*

*Table 43.* Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type: SOF Leaders

| | | | Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | *n* | Mean | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| USSOCOM HQ | 34 | 4.24 | 0% | 3% | 18% | 32% | 47% |
| USASOC | 214 | 4.14 | 0% | 5% | 19% | 32% | 44% |
| CA | 16 | 3.25 [a] | 6% | 13% | 38% | 38% | 6% |
| MISG | 25 | 3.76 [a] | 0% | 12% | 28% | 32% | 28% |
| SF | 155 | 4.33 [a] | 0% | 2% | 15% | 30% | 52% |
| TSOC | 15 | 3.33 | 0% | 20% | 47% | 13% | 20% |
| Deployed SO Unit | 30 | 4.13 | 0% | 7% | 13% | 40% | 40% |
| Other | 17 | 3.47 | 18% | 6% | 18% | 29% | 29% |

*Note.* a) CA used CAT II/III interpreters less than MISG and SF.

Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted.

Comparisons were not made between Army SOF types and other SOF organizations (e.g., MARSOC, TSOC).

1 = *Never,* 2 = *Seldom,* 3 = *Sometimes,* 4 = *Often,* 5 = *Very often*

*Table 44.* Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use by USASOC Unit: SOF Leaders

| Group | *n* | Mean | Frequency of CAT II/III Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| **USASOC HQ** | 6 | 3.83 | 0% | 17% | 0% | 67% | 17% |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 6 | 3.67 | 0% | 0% | 50% | 33% | 17% |
| **4th MISG** | 25 | 3.76 [a] | 0% | 12% | 28% | 32% | 28% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 16 | 3.25 [a,b] | 6% | 13% | 38% | 38% | 6% |
| **1st SFG** | 19 | 3.74 [a] | 0% | 5% | 47% | 16% | 32% |
| **3rd SFG** | 26 | 4.15 | 0% | 0% | 23% | 38% | 38% |
| **5th SFG** | 56 | 4.46 [b] | 0% | 2% | 5% | 38% | 55% |
| **7th SFG** | 19 | 4.26 [b] | 0% | 5% | 21% | 16% | 58% |
| **10th SFG** | 24 | 4.67 [a] | 0% | 0% | 4% | 25% | 71% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 4.40 | 0% | 0% | 20% | 20% | 60% |

*Note.* a) 10th SFG used CAT II/III interpreters more than 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, and 1st SFG.

b) 95th CA Bde used CAT II/III interpreters less than 5th SFG and 7th SFG.

Subgroups with fewer than five respondents (e.g., CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.

1 = *Never,* 2 = *Seldom,* 3 = *Sometimes,* 4 = *Often,* 5 = *Very often*

*Trustworthiness of CAT II/III interpreters*

CAT II/III interpreters are viewed as more trustworthy and less of a security risk than CAT I interpreters, an expected finding given their security clearance.  Overall, SOF operators and leaders placed high levels of trust in CAT II/III interpreters.  As shown in Figure 19 (p. 75), most SOF operators (73%) and leaders (79%) rated CAT II/III interpreters as *trustworthy* or *very trustworthy*.  This high level of trustworthiness is likely due to the fact that CAT II/III interpreters are U.S. citizens with either a Secret or Top Secret clearance.

*Figure 19.*  Trustworthiness of CAT II/III Interpreters
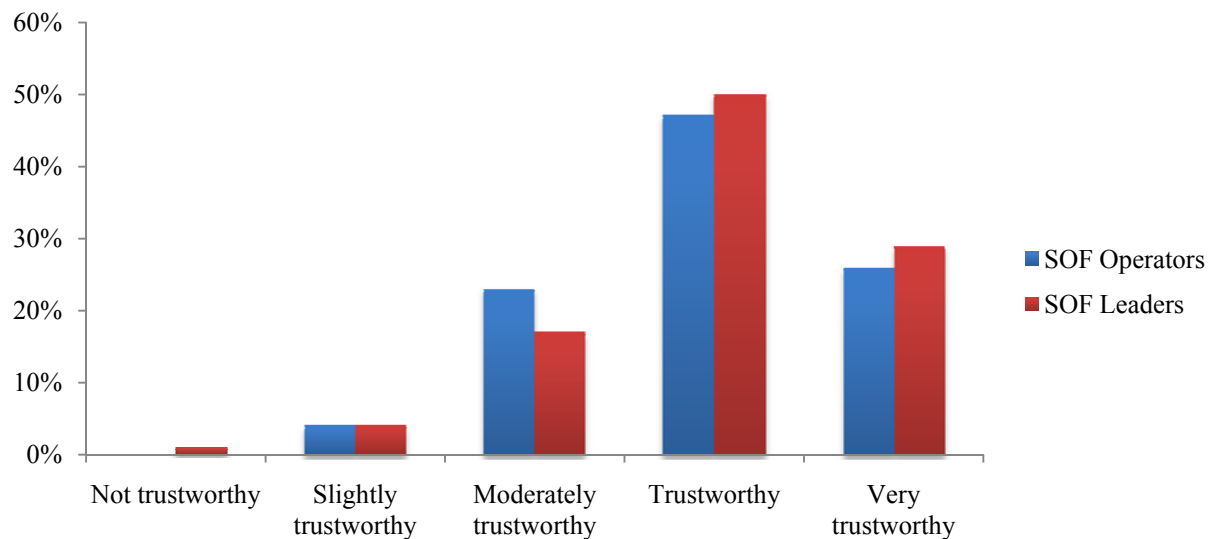


*Note*.  SOF leader: Total *n* = 315, *M* = 4.02, *SD* = 0.82.  SOF operator: Total *n* = 863, *M* = 3.94, *SD* = 0.82.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

Accordingly, many of the open-ended comments made by SOF operators and leaders indicated that CAT II/III interpreters are generally trustworthy.  As stated by one SOF operator,

> *"Most CAT 2&3 Terps are professional and trustworthy."*
>
> SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Although CAT II/III interpreters were seen as more trustworthy than CAT I interpreters, a small percentage of SOF operators and leaders had trust and security concerns regarding CAT II/III interpreters.  For example,

> *"Always think 'MAJ HASSAN.'  Just because they are US Citizens doesn't mean they are trustworthy.  Vet them like you would a CAT I and be mindful of them going native."*
>
> SOF Operator, 7th SFG

Similar to CAT I interpreters, SOF operators and leaders recommended using more stringent screening procedures for CAT II/III interpreters.  As one SOF leader indicated,

> *"CAT II / III interpreters should go thru the same background screening for clearances as Soldiers.  There has been concerns about their understanding of having a clearance besides getting paid more money."*
>
> SOF Leader, 5th SFG

*Competence of CAT II/III interpreters*

CAT II/III interpreters were viewed as competent; 74% of SOF operators and 73% of SOF leaders rated them as *competent* or *very competent* (Figure 20, p. 76) and they were rated as more competent than CAT I interpreters.

*Figure 20.*  Competence of CAT II/III Interpreters
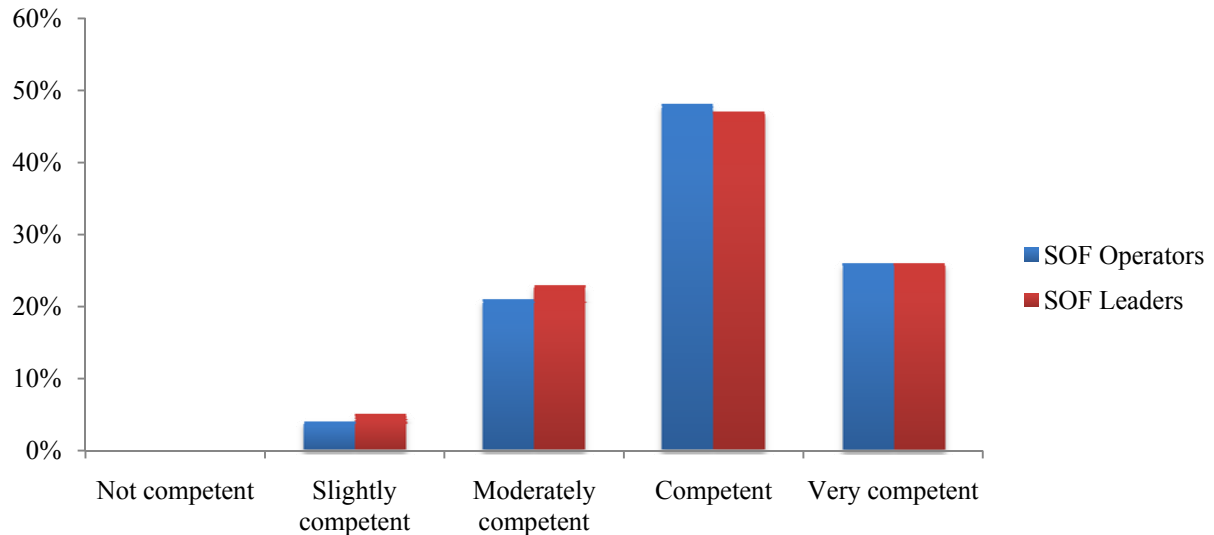


*Note.*  SOF leader: Total $n$ = 313, $M$ = 3.92, $SD$ = 0.84.  SOF operator: Total $n$ = 861, $M$ = 3.95, $SD$ = 0.83.  Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

Respondents' open-ended comments further explain why CAT II/III interpreters are more competent than CAT I interpreters.  Many SOF operators and leaders reported that CAT II/III interpreters had a good grasp of English.  One SOF operator noted,

> *"The few we used had been in the US for years and their English was excellent."*
>
> SOF Operator, 7th SFG

Additionally, many felt that CAT II/III interpreters had sufficient target language proficiency.  One SOF leader observed,

> *"Most CAT II/III interpreters knew Arabic very well, but were not that great at translating it into English..."*
>
> SOF Leader, 4th MISG

However, not all SOF operators and leaders felt that CAT II/III interpreters were competent. The various local dialects in some regions created a problem for many CAT II/III interpreters, as indicated in respondents' open-ended comments. For example, one SOF leader stated,

> *"CAT II/III TERPS, despite having clearances, were not as proficient at local languages. For example a Egyptian Arabic speaking CAT III may have a TS, but would not be effective in Iraq because he speaks a completely different dialect."*
>
> SOF Leader, 10th SFG

A lack of knowledge of the local area's culture was cited as a problem inherent in CAT II/III interpreters because they have been out of the country for many years. One focus group participant mentioned,

> *"A lot of them, as far as culturally, are out of the loop. They've been in America for so long, they're Americanized and not so much Iraqi; they're Americans"*
>
> SOF Operator, 10th SFG

Although the language proficiency and trustworthiness of CAT II/III interpreters are adequate, their lack of military abilities limits their usefulness on missions. One SOF operator observed,

> *"The CAT II/III we used were US civilians that would rather not go on missions but help around the fire base or go on missions were the security level was moderate or low. When pairing CAT II/III they should be trained State side with USSF and have clear understanding that the missions we do at times are of high risk. And be willing to go into risky situations along with team members."*
>
> SOF Operator, 7th SFG

*Confidence in interpreters' ability to convey information*

In general, SOF operators and leaders were confident in both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters' abilities to convey information correctly. Most SOF operators (88%) and leaders (85%) were at least 50% confident in CAT I interpreters' ability to correctly convey information (Figure 21, p. 78). An even higher percentage of SOF operators (96%) and leaders (94%) were at least 50% confident in CAT II/III interpreters' ability to correctly convey information (Figure 22, p. 79). Interestingly, SOF operators were significantly more confident than SOF leaders in both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters' ability to correctly convey information.

One issue that was common to both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters was a lack of military and/or technical terminology. One focus group participant's experience illustrates this problem well:

*"It also becomes very important when you have these—we get, all our terps are like PhDs in English, but they don't know military jargon. And our best terp in Thailand, he's been working with the military for years. But often I get one of these young ladies that's got this PhD, and I can hear her trying to tell the class I'm giving and speak to the Thais, and I know she's messing it up. Just because I know just enough Thai to know that she's not saying something correctly, and then I'll have to refer to one of the Thai soldiers to correct her and put up the correct information. But other, if I didn't catch that, that information would be put out wrong to the soldiers."*

SOF Operator, 1$^{st}$ SFG

Regarding CAT I interpreters, one SOF operator had this to say:

*"The problem with the use my CAT I interpreters was the lack of military knowledge in our profession. I would recommend that those interpreters participate with a pre-mission training with the assigned organization they will work with on missions."*

SOF Operator, 10$^{th}$ SFG

Similar problems occurred with CAT II/III interpreters:

*"If they don't have a military background they have a hard time understanding your intent"*

SOF Operator, 5$^{th}$ SFG

*Figure 21.* Confidence in CAT I Interpreters' Abilities to Convey Information
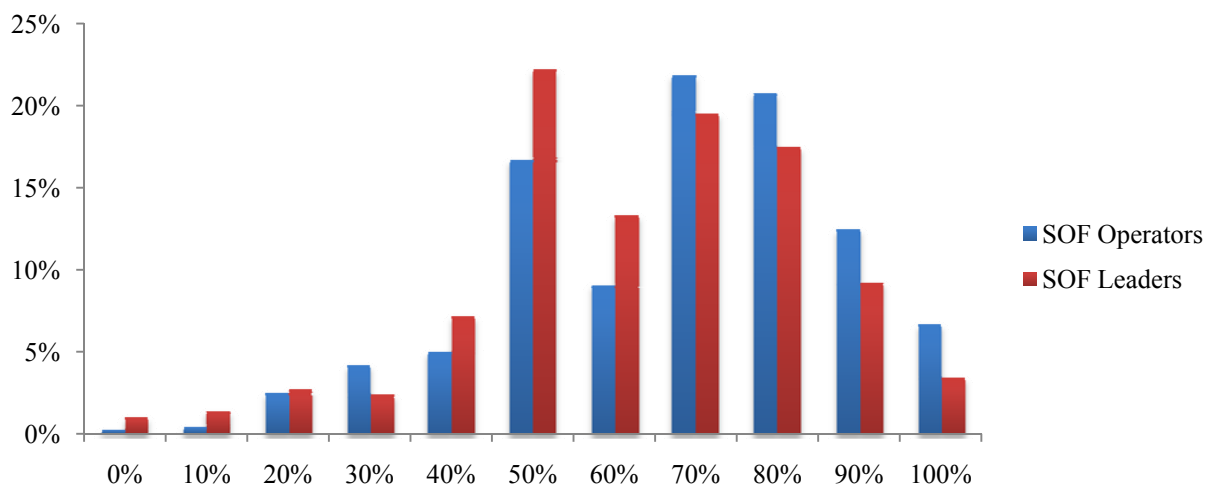


*Note.* SOF leader: Total $n$ = 292, $M$ = 7.28, $SD$ = 2.02. SOF operator: Total $n$ = 760, $M$ = 7.75, $SD$ = 2.01. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Figure 22.* Confidence in CAT II/III Interpreters' Abilities to Convey Information
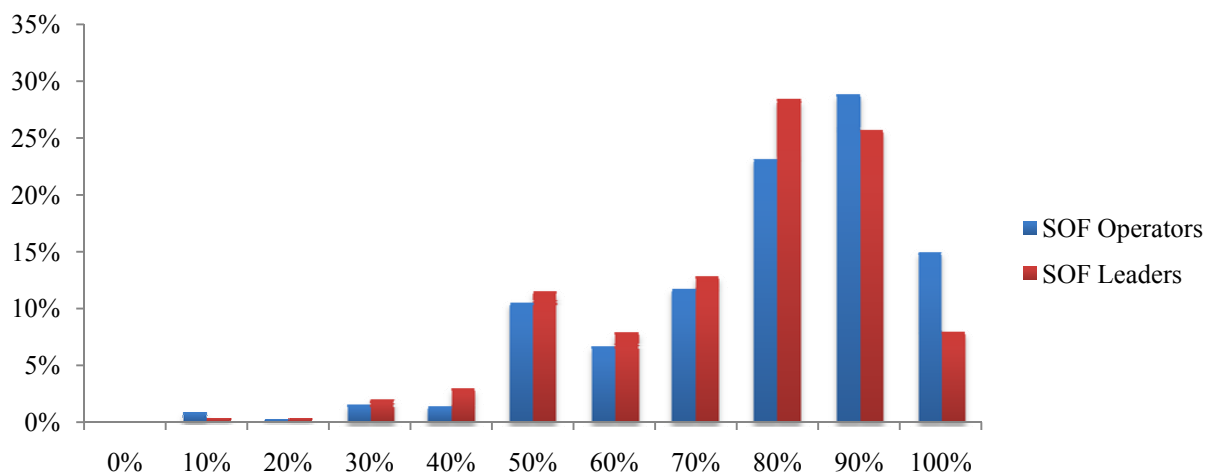


*Note.* SOF leader: Total $n$ = 303, $M$ = 8.52, $SD$ = 1.76. SOF operator: Total $n$ = 790, $M$ = 8.81, $SD$ = 1.82. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

*Types of interpreter used*

Overall, most SOF operators (64%) have used a mix of CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters on missions. SOF leaders indicated that their SOF operators used a mix of CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters across deployments (Figure 23, p. 79). A smaller percentage reported using exclusively CAT I interpreters (16% of SOF operators, 3% of SOF leaders) or exclusively CAT II/III interpreters (18% of SOF operators, 8% of SOF leaders).

*Figure 23.* Types of Interpreters Used
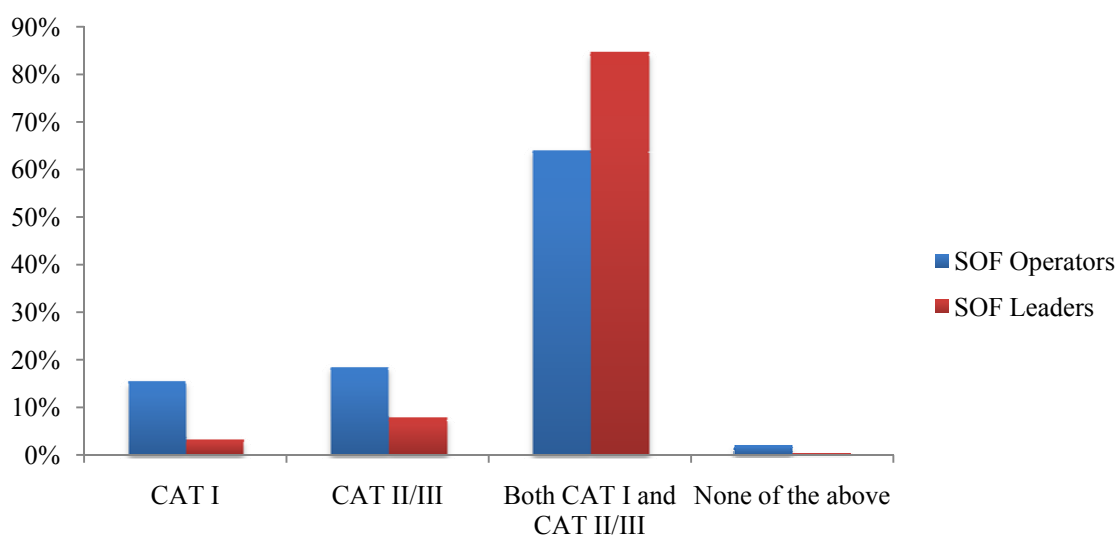


*Note.* SOF leader: Total $n$ = 351. SOF operator; Total $n$ = 1,061. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

The open-ended comments shed some light on why SOF operators use a mix of both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters. Many SOF operators and leaders cited trust and security concerns as being a hindrance to CAT I interpreter use. As one SOF operator said,

> *"Security risks are of the utmost concern with CAT I interpreters."*
>
> SOF Operator, 3rd SFG

CAT II/III interpreters, on the other hand, were generally regarded with a higher degree of trust,

> *"That they understand their job as an interpreter and who they work for (US) and that they would understand that the information they are exposed to needs to stay between them and the (US) service member."*
>
> SOF Operator, USSOCOM Headquarters

Because of their security clearance, SOF operators and leaders perceive CAT II/III interpreters as more trustworthy, making them more valuable in high-security situations than CAT I interpreters. However, despite issues with trustworthiness, CAT I interpreters have characteristics that make them useful to SOF missions. Their familiarity with the local area can be helpful. As one SOF leader stated,

> *"CAT I Terps typically know the local area and local population dynamics that comes in very useful when conducting negotiations or Shuras. CAT II Terps typically have no idea what is going on in a given AO."*
>
> SOF Leader, 3rd SFG

Additionally, CAT I interpreters may be more useful in combat missions, or on missions that require substantial physical fitness. One SOF operator observed,

> *"Often times CAT I terps are only CAT I because they aren't US citizens. We had some CAT I terps that were amazing Iraqi patriots that fought hard, weren't timid and worked their a\*\*\*s off. We also had some CAT III Terps that had an enormous sense of entitlement and would refuse to go on a mission if they felt it was 'too dangerous'."*
>
> SOF Operator, WARCOM

Given the differing advantages and disadvantages of each type of interpreter, maximizing effectiveness on missions may require using a mix of interpreter types.

*Interpreter Preference*

Of those who used both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters on previous missions, many SOF operators and leaders preferred CAT II/III interpreters (Figure 24, p. 81; see Appendix H, Tables 2-5 for preferences by subgroup). More than one-third (38%) of SOF operators preferred CAT II/III interpreters on missions, while a similar percentage of SOF leaders (33%) preferred their unit use CAT II/III interpreters. Only 14% of SOF operators and 10% of SOF leaders preferred a CAT I interpreter on missions. A small

percentage of SOF operators (8%) and leaders (16%) preferred an 09L interpreter; however, this small percentage is likely because 09Ls are an Army-specific military occupational specialty (MOS) and other SOF organizations may be unfamiliar with them (see *09L Use in the SOF Community,* Technical Report #2010011014 for more information on 09Ls).

*Figure 24.* Interpreter Preference
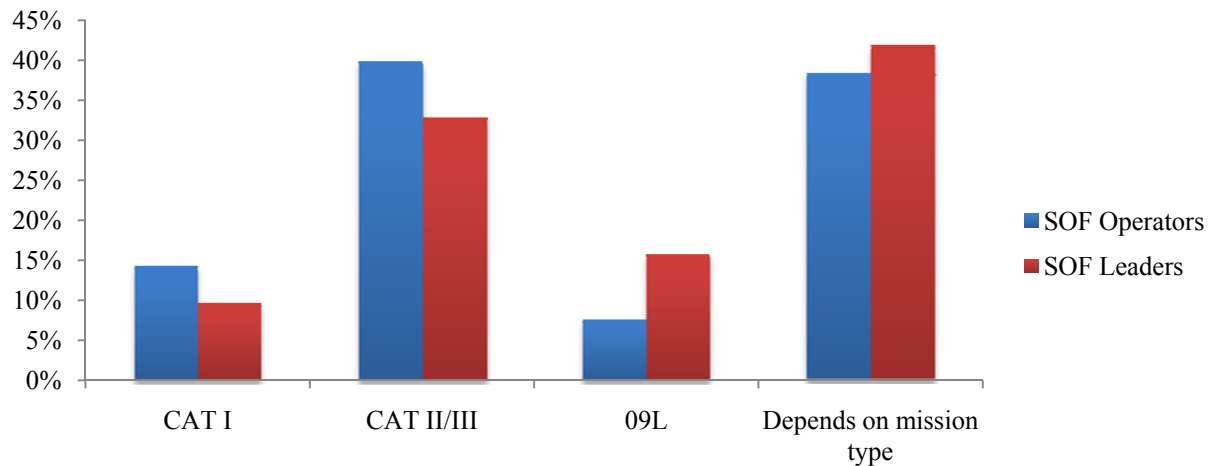


*Note.* SOF leader: Total *n* = 292. SOF operator: Total *n* = 667. Y-axis represents percentage of respondents who indicated each response option.

Interestingly, a large percentage of both SOF operators (38%) and leaders (42%) indicated that their interpreter preference depends on the type of mission (i.e., inside v. outside AOR). Open-ended comments offer some insight as to why interpreter preference depends on the mission.

A large number of comments indicated that CAT I interpreters are typically preferred for: 1) their knowledge of the local area and its customs and culture, 2) low-security or non-sensitive missions, and 3) combat missions. The following comments from the SOF community highlight these preferences.

> *"Sometimes a local CAT1 is better to have than a CAT 3 because they are from the area you may be working in and have personal knowledge and relationships that a CAT 2 or 3 does not."*
>
> SOF Operator, USSOCOM Headquarters

> *"When conveying non-sensitive information; basic military training, a interpreter with a clearance is not necessary. If conducting operations which can result in gathering intelligence or sensitive information for future operations than a clearance would be desired."*
>
> SOF Leader, 3rd SFG

*"Often times, CAT 1 interpreters are more aggressive and combat focused. Additionally, CAT 1 interpreters often have a more in-depth knowledge of the environment, culture and human terrain in the areas that we work. CAT 2/3 are often times better utilized for formal meetings with leaders and classified work but often do not have the combat focus that CAT 1 interpreters may possess. There are always exceptions but my experience has proven this to be true more often than not."*

SOF Leader, 3<sup>rd</sup> SFG

Although their lack of familiarity with the local area was sometimes cited as a drawback, CAT II/III interpreters were overwhelmingly preferred for high-security or sensitive missions.

*"When outside of AOR, teams are usually working on special missions requiring interaction with higher ranking officials. To ensure no loss of rapport and all intentions are understood, a CAT III would be preferred. Using a level I or local can pose biased discussions or translations."*

SOF Operator, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG

*"Some information is classified while executing a mission. Thus, a CAT II/III is necessary in order to read or copy classified material..."*

SOF Operator, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG

*"A CAT II/III interpreter is best used on important KLE with government officials and ASO operations..."*

SOF Operator, 7<sup>th</sup> SFG

Some SOF operators and leaders indicated that their interpreter preference was dependent on whether the mission was inside versus outside their AOR. These respondents indicated that an interpreter was often not required inside the AOR because some tactical element members had language proficiency. On the other hand, when outside the AOR, an interpreter was necessary due to a lack of tactical element proficiency. Although most respondents who reported interpreters were unnecessary for inside AOR missions were from 7<sup>th</sup> SFG, other SOF components and USASOC organizations reported similar feelings. For example,

*"In most cases, interpreters are excess baggage. They are not quality people who can be counted on to accomplish required tasks. Outside the AOR, terps are necessary. Inside the AOR, would never use them because we can rely on our own language skills to accomplish the tasks."*

SOF Leader, 4<sup>th</sup> MISG

Based on the open-ended comments, it appears that CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters each bring unique advantages and disadvantages to missions. CAT I interpreters are usually from the local area and have a better awareness of the local situation. Additionally, CAT I interpreters are better than CAT II/III

interpreters in combat situations.  The lack of trustworthiness and security clearances make CAT I interpreters the preferred interpreter for non-sensitive, low security missions.  CAT II/III interpreters are not from the local area and do not have the current situational awareness of CAT I interpreters.  However, security clearances make CAT II/III interpreters a viable choice for high-security, sensitive missions.  Many SOF operators and leaders also indicated that their interpreter preference depends on whether the mission is inside or outside the AOR, as team language proficiency inside the AOR reduces the need for an interpreter.

## SECTION VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report's goal was to provide SOF leaders with information to inform interpreter use at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Findings show that SOF operators use interpreters frequently and find them vital to SOF mission success both inside and outside the AOR. As expected, 71% of SOF operators use interpreters *often* or *very often* outside the AOR given their lack of language proficiency. However, contrary to expectations, 57% of SOF operators use interpreters *often* or *very often* on inside AOR deployments.

Although SOF operators receive language training in their required AOR language, they are still dependent on interpreters for accomplishing inside AOR missions. For instance, 57% of SOF leaders reported that their units were *dependent* or *very dependent* on interpreters during inside AOR deployments. This suggests that SOF operators are not attaining a working level of language proficiency (e.g., ILR level 2 or higher) in their required language or that personnel can have language proficiency yet still require interpreters. For instance, many SOF operators with or without language proficiency indicated relying on interpreters for the cultural-related mission requirements.

SOF operators indicated that mission effectiveness would suffer if interpreters were not available given that only 18% of SOF operators reported they would be *effective* or *very effective* on outside AOR missions without an interpreter and 39% felt they would be *effective* or *very effective* without interpreters on inside AOR missions. However, findings indicated that language proficiency plays an important role in interpreter use. Specifically, SOF operators who had working proficiency in the target language [Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level 2 and higher] used interpreters less often on inside AOR missions than SOF operators who had lower proficiency levels. Furthermore, SOF operator and leader comments indicated a preference for organic capability rather than relying on interpreters, which is consistent with USSOCOM's goals to reduce the outsourcing of language capability (i.e., using non-SOF interpreters) and increase organic capability.

> *"Use of CAT I interpreters for SOF operations risks compromise of mission due to inability to fully vet. With better language training we would not need to utilize CAT I interpreters."*
>
> SOF Leader, 95th CA Bde

Since interpreters will always be used to some extent, steps should be taken to reduce some of the potential risks involved in using interpreters. Focus group and open-ended survey comments indicated that having SOF operators with some level of language proficiency could mitigate several of the risks. This was illustrated by the following focus group comment,

*"This story just popped into my head when you said that about you can't put all your trust into an interpreter. I was a member, I was in truck [ph] one of a four-truck movement. And it wasn't that big of a deal, but the guys were talking on the radio, and I heard the guy say 'muskula kabir [ph]' which means 'big problem.' And it just popped into my head, because I don't speak a lot of Arabic, but when that hit—and then he hung up the phone like nothing was wrong. I was like, 'What's the problem?' He's like, 'Oh, no problem.' I'm like, 'You said 'muskula kabir,' spit it out, let's go.' So having enough knowledge to be able to have that situational awareness, they had lost truck four; it had gotten lost. And so we were like rolling with three people and somebody was out there by themselves, so, yes, it was a big problem. And they just want to gloss it over, 'No, let's go get them'."*

                                                                SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Although one explanation for reliance on interpreters is the lack of organic language capability on the SOF tactical element, it is possible that interpreters are used for more strategic or tactical purposes, including their knowledge of the local area and culture. Even on inside AOR missions, where some tactical element members have language proficiency, SOF operators and leaders indicated that interpreters were important, used frequently, and few thought they could be *effective* or *very effective* without interpreters.

Regardless of the reason for their use, it is clear that interpreters play an important role on SOF missions. However, there are many issues to consider when determining which types of interpreters are appropriate for SOF operator use on their missions. In general, both CAT I and CAT II/III interpreters were viewed as competent, and SOF operators and leaders were reasonably confident in the interpreters' abilities to convey information correctly. Despite this, SOF operators and leaders indicated that there were issues associated with using each type of interpreter.

CAT I interpreters were generally seen as competent, but SOF operators and leaders expressed concerns regarding the CAT I interpreters' trustworthiness and the screening process used to select them. Less than half of SOF operators and leaders felt that CAT I interpreters were trustworthy, and two of the most prevalent open-ended comment themes were trust and security concerns and the screening process. One SOF leader observed,

*"Extensive control measures need to be implemented when using CAT I interpreters to protect OPSEC and classified information, protect sensitive sources and methods, accommodate terp personal requirements, and sometimes provide protection for terp and family."*

                                                                SOF Leader, Other SOF Organization

As many SOF operators and leaders indicated problems with the CAT I screening process, they suggested a need for a more stringent screening process to mitigate some of the security risks. One SOF leader suggested,

> *"We need to take a look at better support for background checks on individuals who desire to become a CAT I interpreter for any SOF unit."*
>
> SOF Leader, 3<sup>rd</sup> SFG

The *Interpreter Ops: Multi-Service Reference Manual for Interpreter Operations* (2004) details several important qualities for consideration in selecting CAT I interpreters.  Based on these suggestions and respondents' open-ended comments, SOF operators should consider the following when informally screening CAT I interpreters:

- Use a trusted interpreter to screen the potential hire for local area language proficiency
- Conduct a background check, if possible, to screen out interpreters who are unreliable, untrustworthy, or are likely to have conflicting loyalties
- Assess the interpreter's English proficiency
- Ensure the interpreter's personal characteristics (age, gender, social status, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, etc.) will not clash with the target audience (e.g., host nation counterparts)

According to respondents, CAT II/III interpreters were more trustworthy and competent than CAT I interpreters.  However, SOF operators' and leaders' comments indicated a number of concerns when using CAT II/III interpreters, including 1) a lack of physical fitness, 2) an unwillingness to engage in risky and/or combat situations, and 3) unfamiliarity with the local area and local dialect.  CAT II/III interpreters' lack of knowledge of the local dialect was a frequent issue cited by SOF operators and leaders.  For example,

> *"These interpreters are not from the area and at times do not understand what is important or understand the local dialect. This could easily turn bad in a complicated situation."*
>
> SOF Operator, 7<sup>th</sup> SFG

To avoid a discrepancy between the CAT II/III interpreter's language and the local dialect, CAT II/III interpreters should only deploy to areas where they are familiar with the major dialect spoken.  Alternatively, pre-deployment local dialect training should be provided to all CAT II/III interpreters.

SOF operators and leaders were concerned with CAT II/III interpreters' frequent unwillingness or incapability of accompanying SOF units in high-risk or combat situations.  Some CAT II/III interpreters were unable to meet the physical depends of SOF missions.  As one SOF operator explained,

> *"Challenge with CAT II/III interpreters is to be able to get someone physically fit enough to go on missions with you.  Many of the CAT II/III barely fit into body armor or are so old they are not going to go on a mission with you and are relegated to on base or political discussions.  There needs to be a physical screening for SOF, if possible."*
>
> SOF Operator, USSOCOM Headquarters

To ensure that CAT II/III interpreters are physically able to accompany SOF operators on missions, their level of physical fitness and health should be assessed as part of the selection process, especially if they will be needed for strenuous tactical missions.

Despite the frequent use of interpreters, 42% of SOF operators reported receiving pre-deployment training on the use of interpreters. On the other hand, 59% of SOF leaders reported that their units received pre-deployment training, indicating a disconnect between SOF operator and leader perceptions. This suggests that SOF leaders may be unaware that they are preparing insufficient training resources. If SOF operators are not learning the skills necessary for proper interpreter use, their effectiveness when communicating on missions may be greatly reduced. To ensure that all SOF operators have the skills and knowledge required to utilize interpreters effectively, they should receive standardized pre-deployment training on how to use interpreters.

Overall, it is important to determine if the current level of reliance on interpreters is appropriate. Given that most SOF operators do not have the necessary proficiency levels to meet the language-related mission requirements (*Inside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report #2010011010; *Outside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report #2010011011), one current solution is to outsource the requirement and to rely on interpreters. This report provided findings related to the current use of interpreters across all missions[7], for additional findings and recommendations related to interpreter use, please see the *Tier II* report, *Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011028).

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[7] For findings related to interpreter use on specific missions, see *Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters* (Technical Report #2010011012). For findings related to the use of 09Ls, see *09L Use in the SOF Community* (Technical Report #2010011014).

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**ABOUT SWA CONSULTING INC.**

SWA Consulting Inc. (formerly Surface, Ward, and Associates) provides analytics and evidence-based solutions for clients using the principles and methods of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology. Since 1997, SWA has advised and assisted corporate, non-profit and governmental clients on:

- Training and development
- Performance measurement and management
- Organizational effectiveness
- Test development and validation
- Program/training evaluation
- Work/job analysis
- Needs assessment
- Selection system design
- Study and analysis related to human capital issues
- Metric development and data collection
- Advanced data analysis

One specific practice area is analytics, research, and consulting on foreign language and culture in work contexts. In this area, SWA has conducted numerous projects, including language assessment validation and psychometric research; evaluations of language training, training tools, and job aids; language and culture focused needs assessments and job analysis; and advanced analysis of language research data.

Based in Raleigh, NC, and led by Drs. Eric A. Surface and Stephen J. Ward, SWA now employs close to twenty I/O professionals at the masters and PhD levels. SWA professionals are committed to providing clients the best data and analysis upon which to make evidence-based decisions. Taking a scientist-practitioner perspective, SWA professionals conduct model-based, evidence-driven research and consulting to provide the best answers and solutions to enhance our clients' mission and business objectives. SWA has competencies in measurement, data collection, analytics, data modeling, systematic reviews, validation, and evaluation.

For more information about SWA, our projects, and our capabilities, please visit our website (www.swa-consulting.com) or contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Stephen J. Ward (sward@swa-consulting.com).

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**APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT**

In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to inform the development of a language transformation strategy in response to a GAO report (2003). This *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* collected current-state information about language usage, proficiency, training, and policy issues (e.g., Foreign Language Proficiency Pay, FLPP) from SOF personnel, SOF unit leaders, and other personnel involved in SOF language. The project used multiple data collection methods and provided the SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and advocate for the SOF perspective on language issues within the DoD community.

In a continuing effort to update knowledge of language and culture needs while informing strategic plan development, the SOFLO commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) to reassess the language and culture landscape across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and develop a strategy for the next five years. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including operators and leaders. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted between March and June, 2009. A comprehensive, web-based survey for SOF operators and leaders was launched on 26 October and closed on 24 November, 2009.

This project's findings will be disseminated through reports and briefings (Appendix A, Figure 1). Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. The remaining reports are organized in three tiers. Twenty-five *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment)* while including additional data and analysis on the topic. Most, but not all, *Tier I* reports will roll into *Tier II* reports. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. All Tier III reports are associated with a briefing. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and subject to change.

In June, 2009, the GAO reported that the Department of Defense is making progress toward transforming language and regional proficiency capabilities but still does not have a strategic plan in place to continue development that includes actionable goals and objectives. The findings from this study can be used by the SOFLO and leaders at USSOCOM to continue strategic planning and development in this area.

This project design, logistics, data collection, initial analysis and first eight reports of this project were conducted by SWA Consulting Inc. (SWA) under a subcontract with SRC (SR20080668 (K142); Prime # N65236-08-D-6805). The additional reports are funded under a separate contracting vehicle with Gemini Industries Inc. [GEM02-ALMBOS-0018 (10210SWA-1); Prime # USZA22-02-D-0015]. For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

*Appendix A, Figure 1*.  Report Overview

| Foundation Reports | Tier I Reports First Contract | Tier II Reports Second Contract |
|---|---|---|

Foundation Reports:
1. Methodology Report
2. Participation Report

Tier I Reports First Contract:
3. Reactions to Admiral Olson's Memo
4. Training Emphasis: Language and Culture
5. Command Support: Grading the Chain of Command
6. SOFLO Support
7. Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge
8. Language Composition of SOF Tactical Elements

Tier II Reports Second Contract:
30. Use of Language and Culture on Deployment
31. Use of Interpreters
32. Tactical Element Composition and Capability
33. Testing/Metrics
34. Current State of Language and Culture Training
35. Language Training Guidance
36. Culture Training Guidance
37. Incentives/Barriers

Tier I Reports Second Contract:
9. Inside AOR Use of Language
10. Outside AOR Use of Language
11. Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters
12. General Use of Interpreters
13. 09L Use in the Special Operations Forces Community
14. DLPT
15. OPI
16. DLAB: Perspectives from the Field
17. Initial Acquisition Training
18. Sustainment/Enhancement Training
19. Culture Awareness and Knowledge Training
20. Immersion Training
21. Language Resources & Self-Study
22. Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus
23. Non-monetary Incentives
24. Considering Language in the Promotion Process
25. Barriers to Language Acquisition and Maintenance
26. Force Motivation for Language
27. Leader Perspectives on Language Issues
28. Leader Perspectives on Language Resources
29. CLPM Perspectives

Tier III Reports Second Contract:
38. Overall Picture: Conclusions and Recommendations
39. AFSOC
40. MARSOC
41. WARCOM
42. SF Command
43. CA
44. MISG
45. Seminar Briefing(s)

*Note*: Foundation reports are referenced by every other report. Colors represent *Tier I* reports that roll (integrate) into an associated *Tier II* report. Reports in black are final reports on the topic but may be cited by other reports. *Tier II* reports roll into the *Tier III* reports. All *Tier III* reports include an associated briefing.

**APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY**

**Participants**

*Focus Group Participants*
Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 126 SOF personnel across the SOF community.  Focus groups were conducted with AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, and USASOC personnel (see *Participation Report,* Technical Report #2010011003 for participant details).  Various sections of this report present focus group discussion related to participants' experiences with interpreters on deployments (see *Methodology Report,* Technical Report #2010011002 for the focus group interview guide).

*Survey Participants*
Survey respondents received the SOF operator version of the interpreter items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:
  - SOF Operator
  - SOF Operator assigned to other duty
  - Currently in the training pipeline

Of the 1,377 SOF operators (i.e., SOF operators or SOF operators assigned to other duties) who responded to the first interpreter survey item, 79% ($n = 1,085$) had used an interpreter on a mission in the past four years.  Of these respondents, 94% were from the Army.  Most (72%) respondents from the Army were currently assigned in USASOC.  Please see the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for details about the survey attrition rate across survey topic areas.

Survey respondents received the SOF leader version of the interpreter items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:
  - SOF Unit Commanders and Unit Leadership of O3 Commands or higher, including Staff, Support, and Specialists

Before presented with the interpreter items, SOF leaders were asked "are you in a position to comment on your unit's use of interpreters on missions during your tenure with the unit?"  This allowed SOF leaders who could not accurately answer the questions to self-select themselves out of this topic area.  Of the 957 leaders (i.e., SOF Unit Commanders and Unit Leadership of O3 Commands or higher) who responded to this item, 71% ($n = 679$) indicated 'yes', but only 53% ($n = 357$) of the 679 SOF leaders indicated 'yes' they were in a position to comment.  The SOF leader group includes commanders, senior warrant officer advisors (SWOAs)/senior enlisted advisors (SEAs), and staff officers (O, WO, NCO, GS).

*SOF Type Classification*
Respondents from USASOC were classified into SOF types (e.g., CA, MISG, and SF) based on two criteria:
  - USASOC unit to which they are assigned (e.g., 1st SFG classified as SF, 4th MISG as MISG, 95th CA Bde as CA)
  - Reported MOS (e.g., 18 series classified as SF, 37 series as MISG, 38 series as CA)

**Measures**

*Items*
The first interpreter survey item assessed various issues regarding interpreter use.  The items covered the following topic areas for those who had reported using interpreters (see Appendix B, Figure 1 for SOF operator branching logic):

- Pre-deployment training on how to use an interpreter
- Frequency of interpreter use
- Effectiveness without use of interpreter
- Tasks where interpreters were used
- Specific items about the type of interpreter used (i.e., CAT I, CAT II/III)

SOF leaders answered items from the same topic areas as SOF operators, but responded from the perspective of their unit's deployed operators and linguists experiences with using interpreters across all deployments (see Appendix B, Figure 2 for leader branching logic).  Instead of identifying tasks where SOF operators used interpreters, SOF leaders were asked to indicate their confidence in their unit's ability to carry out the SOF core tasks without the aid of an interpreter. Additionally, they were asked about their unit's dependence on interpreters and how important interpreters are to carry out missions.

**Analyses**

All closed-ended items were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics.  For each item, the frequencies for each response option are presented.  To compare responses across groups of participants, inferential statistics (e.g., analysis of variance, Chi squares, *t*-tests) were used to determine if any observed differences are likely to exist in the broader SOF community.

To analyze the focus group and open-ended items (survey comments), rater pairs created a content code (i.e., themes) list based on available responses (see *Methodology Report,* Technical Report #2010011002 for details on qualitative coding).  A primary rater then coded each response and a secondary rater coded 30% of the responses.  Raters determined the consistency of codes applied between them and discussed any disagreements to consensus.  The frequency of occurrence for each theme is presented in this report.

For further details on these methods please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

*Appendix B, Figure 1.* SOF Operator Branching Logic

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │  Have you used an         │
                    │  interpreter on           │
                    │  deployment in past 4     │
                    │  years?                   │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                       │                    │
                       ▼                    ▼
              ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
              │     Yes      │      │     No       │
              └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
                       │
                       ▼
          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
          │  Did you receive              │
          │  pre-deployment training on   │
          │  how to use an interpreter?   │
          └──────────────────────────────┘
              │                    │
              ▼                    ▼
          ┌────────┐          ┌────────┐
          │  Yes   │          │  No    │
          └────────┘          └────────┘
              │                    │
              ▼                    ▼
   ┌────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────────┐
   │ How effective was  │   │ How useful would it     │
   │ the pre-deployment │   │ have been to receive    │
   │ training you       │   │ pre-deployment training │
   │ received on using  │   │ on using interpreters?  │
   │ interpreters?      │   │                         │
   └────────────────────┘   └────────────────────────┘
              │                    │
              ▼                    ▼
          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
          │  What type(s) of interpreters │
          │  have you used on your        │
          │  missions?                    │
          └──────────────────────────────┘
```

CAT I     CAT II/III     Both of the above     Neither of the above

Which type of interpreter would you prefer to use on missions?

CAT I     CAT II/III     Depends on mission     09L

Please explain your thoughts on why the use of an interpreter depends on the type of mission.

*Appendix B, Figure 2.* SOF Leader Branching Logic
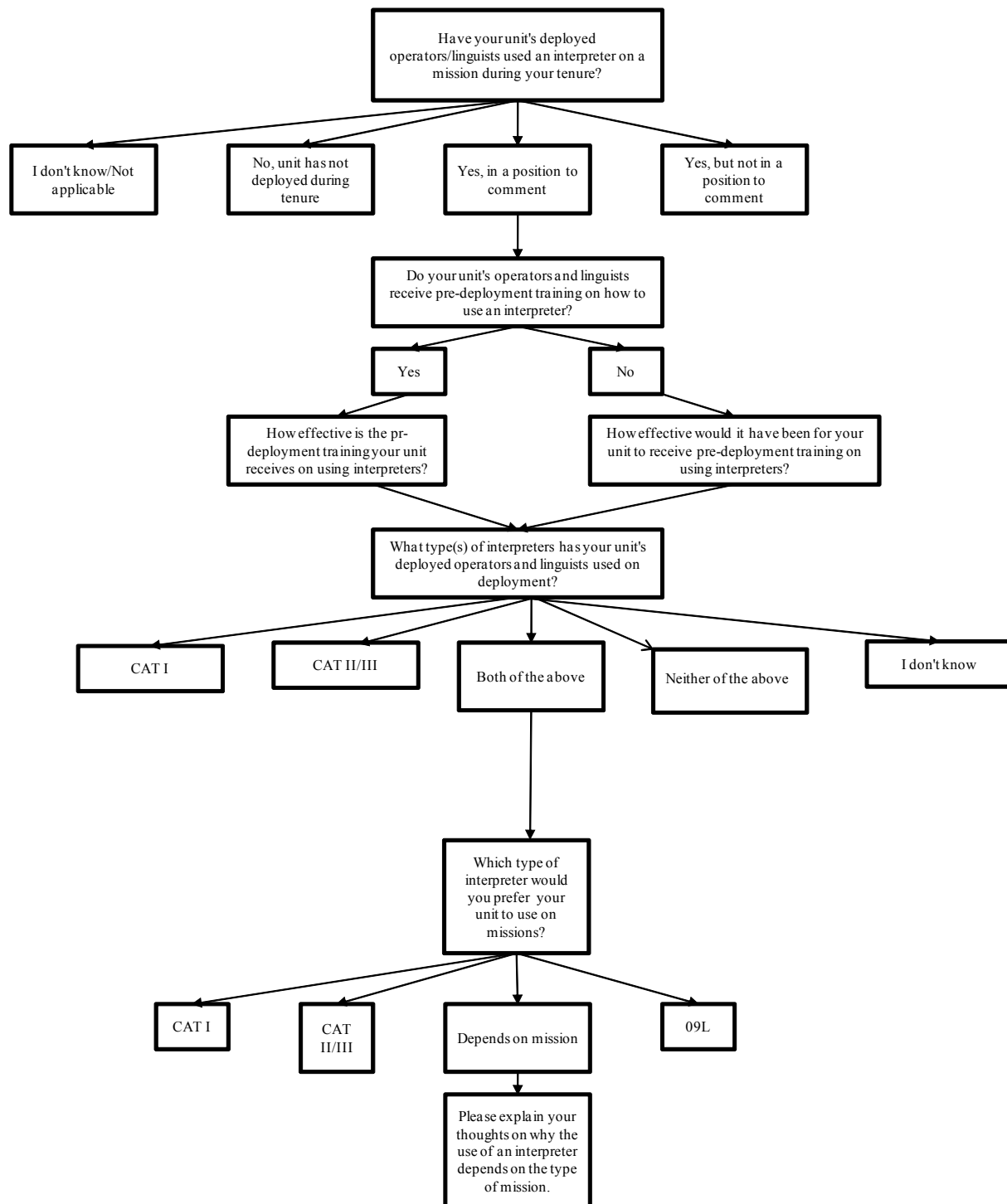
## APPENDIX C: COMMENT CODE FREQUENCIES

SOF operators and leaders were given the opportunity to provide comments in response to the following survey prompts:

- *Please elaborate on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of* [pre-deployment interpreter training].
- *Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT I interpreters.*
- *Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT II/III interpreters.*
- *Please explain your thoughts on why the type of interpreter you prefer (your unit) to use depends on the type of mission.*

The following tables detail the response frequencies for each comment code.

*Appendix C, Table 1.* Code Frequencies: Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training Effectiveness

| Please elaborate on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of this training. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Training effective | 91 | 71 | 20 |
| Training ineffective | 11 | 7 | 4 |
| Did not receive any formal training | 30 | 15 | 15 |
| Suggestions for improvement | 27 | 12 | 15 |
| Teaching methods | | | |
| Teaching methods effective | 15 | 6 | 9 |
| Teaching methods ineffective | 17 | 9 | 8 |
| Used scenario-based/role playing training | 26 | 10 | 16 |
| Training content | | | |
| Cultural awareness | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Relationship with interpreter | 21 | 19 | 2 |
| Specific techniques for using interpreters | 83 | 64 | 19 |
| Too general/non-specific | 9 | 8 | 1 |
| Only targets soldiers with no experience with interpreters | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Suggestions about areas where more training is needed | 9 | 7 | 2 |
| Quality of instructor | | | |
| Poor | 1 | - | 1 |
| Length of training | | | |
| Too short-need more | 13 | 6 | 7 |
| Importance of training with interpreter prior to deployment | 11 | 6 | 5 |
| General comment about interpreters | 24 | 16 | 8 |
| Interpreters not standard/variance in interpreters | | | |
| Quality | 14 | 7 | 7 |
| Personality | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Trustworthiness | 1 | 1 | - |
| Frequency/placement of training | 3 | - | 3 |

*Note.* Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 1 (cont).* Code Frequencies: Pre-Deployment Interpreter Training Effectiveness

| Please elaborate on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of this training. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| General statement about importance of training | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| General statement about training received | 31 | 19 | 12 |
| Positive statement about training received | 5 | 5 | - |
| Negative statement about training received | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Other | 9 | 9 | - |
| NA/Not relevant/No comment | 9 | 7 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **481** | **317** | **164** |

*Note.* Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 2.* Code Frequencies: CAT I Interpreters

| Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT I interpreters. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trust/security concerns | 120 | 98 | 22 |
| Selection process | 151 | 104 | 47 |
| Variance in quality | 66 | 53 | 13 |
| No military/technical knowledge | 12 | 11 | 1 |
| Not enough interpreters to go around | 19 | 7 | 12 |
| Contractor issues | 32 | 17 | 15 |
| English proficiency | 7 | 6 | 1 |
|    Good English proficiency | 5 | 5 | - |
|    Poor English proficiency | 18 | 16 | 2 |
| Target language proficiency | 7 | 7 | - |
|    Good target language proficiency | 7 | 7 | - |
|    Poor target language proficiency | 7 | 7 | - |
|    Regional dialect issues | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Team should select/manage interpreter | 12 | 3 | 9 |
| No changes needed | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| Cultural/religious/ethnic/tribal issues | 9 | 9 | - |
| Health/physical fitness | 7 | 5 | 2 |

*Note.* Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 2 (cont).*  Code Frequencies: CAT I Interpreters

| Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT I interpreters. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use in combat situation | 4 | 2 | 2 |
|    Should be able to carry weapons | 3 | - | 3 |
|    Not effective in combat situations | 2 | 2 | - |
|    Effective in combat situations | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| Building situational awareness | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Cultural awareness | 31 | 25 | 6 |
| Rapport | 21 | 19 | 2 |
| Awareness of agenda/personal motivation | 27 | 23 | 4 |
| CAT I interpreters should not be selected from immediate vicinity | 7 | 7 | - |
| Team should not need interpreters | 20 | 14 | 6 |
| Should only use CAT II/III interpreters | 14 | 9 | 5 |
| Pay issues | 36 | 22 | 14 |
| CAT I interpreters better | 12 | 8 | 4 |
|    Awareness of local area | 12 | 9 | 3 |
| Cat II/III interpreters better | 11 | 9 | 2 |
|    Better for high-security missions | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Limited or no experience with CAT I interpreters | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Effectiveness depends on situation | 25 | 20 | 5 |
| Need to treat CAT I interpreters with respect/professionalism | 14 | 12 | 2 |
| Should only be used as last resort | 18 | 12 | 6 |

*Note.*  Some comments contained multiple themes.  Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 2 (cont).*  Code Frequencies: CAT I Interpreters

| Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT I interpreters. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use of interpreter training | | | |
|    Use of interpreter training needed | 10 | 9 | 1 |
|    Use of interpreter training effective | 1 | 1 | - |
| Interpreters need more/additional training | 18 | 13 | 5 |
| General positive comment | 58 | 48 | 10 |
| General negative comment | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Other | 28 | 21 | 7 |
| N/A/Not relevant/No comment | 47 | 38 | 9 |
| **TOTAL** | **938** | **702** | **236** |

*Note.*  Some comments contained multiple themes.  Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 3.*  Code Frequencies: CAT II/III Interpreters

| Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT II/III interpreters. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trust/security concerns | 43 | 36 | 7 |
| Vetting/selection process | 47 | 28 | 19 |
| Variance in quality | 33 | 26 | 7 |
| No military/technical knowledge | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Not enough interpreters to go around | 40 | 17 | 23 |
| Contractor issues | 16 | 9 | 7 |
| English proficiency | 7 | 6 | 1 |
|    Good English proficiency | 10 | 10 | - |
|    Poor English proficiency | 12 | 10 | 2 |
| Target language proficiency | 19 | 18 | 1 |
|    Good target language proficiency | 5 | 3 | 2 |
|    Poor target language proficiency | 15 | 10 | 5 |
|    Regional dialect issues | 28 | 19 | 9 |
| Team should select/manage interpreter | 2 | 1 | 1 |

*Note.*  Some comments contained multiple themes.  Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 3 (cont).*  Code Frequencies: CAT II/III Interpreters

| Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT II/III interpreters. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| No changes needed | 2 | - | 2 |
| Cultural/religious/ethnic/tribal issues | 19 | 13 | 6 |
| Health/physical fitness | 32 | 21 | 11 |
| Use in combat situation | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|     Should be able to carry weapons | 4 | - | 4 |
|     Not effective in combat situations | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Building situational awareness | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Cultural awareness | 5 | 3 | 2 |
|     CAT II/III interpreters lack current cultural awareness | 21 | 14 | 7 |
| Rapport | 14 | 9 | 5 |
| Awareness of agenda/personal motivation | 39 | 30 | 9 |
| Team should not need interpreters | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Pay issues | 17 | 13 | 4 |
| CAT I interpreters better | 17 | 9 | 8 |
|     Awareness of local area | 5 | 5 | - |
| Cat II/III interpreters better | 16 | 9 | 7 |
|     Better for high-security missions | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| Limited or no experience with CAT II/III interpreters | 2 | 2 | - |
| Reluctant to work in combat/high-risk situation | 23 | 20 | 3 |
| Effectiveness depends on situation | 5 | 5 | - |
| CAT II/III interpreters are lazy/feel entitled | 36 | 29 | 7 |
| CAT II/III interpreters are trustworthy | 22 | 19 | 3 |
| Comment about use of interpreter training | 2 | 2 | - |
|     Use of interpreter training needed | 5 | 4 | 1 |

*Note.*  Some comments contained multiple themes.  Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 3 (cont).*  Code Frequencies: CAT II/III Interpreters

| Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the use of CAT II/III interpreters. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interpreters need more/additional training | 35 | 23 | 12 |
| General positive comment | 76 | 65 | 11 |
| General negative comment | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Other | 41 | 31 | 10 |
| N/A/Not relevant/No comment | 72 | 56 | 16 |
| **TOTAL** | **821** | **597** | **224** |

*Note.*  Some comments contained multiple themes.  Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 4.*  Code Frequencies: Why Interpreter Preference Depends on Mission

| Please explain your thoughts on why the type of interpreter you prefer to use depends on the type of mission. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prefer 09L | 2 | 2 | - |
| For local area language proficiency | 2 | - | 2 |
| For inside AOR missions | 1 | 1 | - |
| For combat situations | 11 | 2 | 9 |
| For non-combat situations | 1 | 1 | - |
| For sensitive missions/high security missions | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Prefer CAT I interpreter | 3 | 3 | - |
| For local area language proficiency | 12 | 5 | 7 |
| For inside AOR missions | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| For outside AOR missions | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| For combat situations | 12 | 10 | 2 |
| For non-combat situations | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| For knowledge of local area/culture/customs | 71 | 45 | 26 |
| For non-sensitive/low security missions | 22 | 11 | 11 |

*Note.*  Some comments contained multiple themes.  Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

*Appendix C, Table 4 (cont).* Code Frequencies: Why Interpreter Preference Depends on Mission

| Please explain your thoughts on why the type of interpreter you prefer to use depends on the type of mission. | Frequency (total *n*) | SOF Operator | SOF Leader |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prefer CAT II/III interpreter | 1 | 1 | - |
| For outside AOR missions | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| For inside AOR missions | 1 | 1 | - |
| For combat situations | 2 | - | 2 |
| For non-combat situations | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| For knowledge of local area/culture/customs | 3 | - | 3 |
| For sensitive missions/high security missions | 48 | 29 | 19 |
| General operational security (OPSEC) issues | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| CAT I interpreters pose security risk | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| General statement about interpreter choice being dependent upon situation | 44 | 23 | 21 |
| Combat/noncombat | 2 | 2 | - |
| Sensitivity of information | 11 | 10 | 1 |
| Trustworthiness | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| Difficulty of language/translation | 1 | 1 | - |
| Health/physical fitness | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Interpreter choice dependent on availability of interpreters | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Interpreter choice dependent on target audience | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Prefer language skills on team so that interpreters are not needed | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| General statement about 09Ls | 13 | 5 | 8 |
| General statement about CAT I interpreters | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| General statement about CAT II/III interpreters | 16 | 8 | 8 |
| Depends on mission (i.e., inside v. outside AOR) | 34 | 22 | 12 |
| Other | 47 | 28 | 19 |
| N/A/Not relevant/No comment | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **434** | **252** | **182** |

*Note.* Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

**APPENDIX D: COMMENT CODE DEFINITIONS**

All survey comments were content analyzed and common themes were extracted.  The resulting themes, which were consistent for both SOF operators and leaders, are provided below with a definition of each theme and a verbatim exemplar comment that illustrates the theme.  For more information about this study's content analysis process, please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

Note: Exemplar comments are presented verbatim and are not corrected for grammatical mistakes.

**Pre-deployment interpreter training effectiveness/ineffectiveness**

- Training effective
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that the pre-deployment training received on using interpreters was effective.
        - "Effective, native speakers were contracted by the unit"
- Training ineffective
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that the pre-deployment training received on using interpreters was ineffective.
        - "I do not feel that 2 hours of training in a year prepared me, or my team for 24hour reliance on an interpreter"
- Did not receive any formal training (e.g., on-the-job training, lessons learned from other personnel in the unit)
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that he/she did not receive any formal training on the use of interpreters, although informal training may have been received.
        - "Training as I am calling it has been acquired by myself through numerous years in SOF and numerous training courses.  I have never received formal 'How to use an interpreter' training.  My training comes from the Q-Course, ASOT, SERE, personal experience and NCOPD or water cooler discussions."
- Suggestions for improvement
    - Definition: Respondent provides a suggestion for the improvement of pre-deployment interpreter training.
        - "an actual interpreter would have increased the training value"

*Teaching Methods*
- Training methods effective
    - Definition: This applies to any discussion about pre-deployment interpreter training teaching methods that were effective.
        - "We received very effective training which included practical exercises and AARs on multiple occasions."

- Training methods ineffective
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about pre-deployment interpreter training teaching methods that were ineffective.
    - "Just classroom training and no interaction with a true interpreter"
- Training methods used scenario-based/role-playing training
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about pre-deployment interpreter training that made use of scenario-based or role-playing training.
    - "We were put into scenarios with actual locals to speak with through an interpreter and we were evaluated"

*Training Content*
- Cultural awareness
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about gaining cultural awareness during pre-deployment interpreter training.
    - "Got you in the mind set to be aware of their cultural taboos"
- Relationship with interpreter (including trust and OPSEC issues)
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the relationship between SOF personnel and interpreters, including trust and OPSEC issues.
    - "There's a tendency to act like like 'terps or translators are an object, not a person. I've found that if you treat the guy/girl like a valued member of the team, not the enemy (understanding that security is paramount) you generally get better work out of them.  During deployments, this happens about 50/50, but in the class room, everyone tries to act too cool for school."
- Specific techniques for using interpreters (e.g., talk to person and not interpreter, rate of speech, vocabulary used, etc.)
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about specific techniques learned for using interpreters.
    - "Training provided an understanding of how difficult it can be to express complex ideas using an advanced vocabulary, unless your terp is very educated in both languages.  It also emphasized that the speaker should address the target person(s) and not the terp (look at the target not the terp).  Conversations and instruction takes twice as long as normal using terps and teaching through demonstration is absolutely vital."
- Too general/non-specific
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that pre-deployment interpreter training was general and non-specific.
    - "Pretty generic stuff that could be covered in 10 minutes."
- Only targets soldiers with no experience with interpreters
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that the pre-deployment interpreter training received only covered topics relevant to personnel with no experience using interpreters.
    - "I have experience using interpreters and the training was useful for non-experienced personnel."

- Suggestions about areas where more training is needed
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about content areas where more interpreter training is needed.
    - ▪ "Training on how to utilize an interpreter within this culture would have been good."

*Quality of Instructor*
- Poor
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that the pre-deployment interpreter training instructor was of poor quality.
    - ▪ "Training was brief and somewhat ineffective - mostly due to the instructor. Contracting a vetted and experienced instructor for language, cultural, and interpreter training would greatly increase the effectiveness.  If possible, a list could be created (at USASOC or the contractor's company) of knowledgeable instructors for this type of training, not just a bilingual role player from Mackall."

*Length of Training*
- Too short—need more
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that the pre-deployment interpreter training was too short, or that more pre-deployment interpreter training was needed.
    - ▪ "good, but we need to do more."

*Interpreters not standard/variance in interpreters*
- Quality
  - o Definition: This applies to any general discussion about the variance in interpreters
    - ▪ "Interpreters were contracted civilians assigned to the PRT teams. It was a gamble whether you received a good one vrs a bad one. Never knew until he or she was utilized the first time during training. Terps take time to establish rapport with the team and also build continuity with locals. The ones we trained with during pre-deployment were not the ones assigned to us down range."
- Personality
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about interpreters varying in personality.
    - ▪ "The training can't prepare you for you interpreters personality"
- Trustworthiness
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about interpreters varying in terms of trustworthiness.
    - ▪ "The culture of the people we delta with was so different from Westerners that it was almost impossible to judge if the interpreter were conveying the messages which we wanted conveyed with the intent we wanted conveyed or if the interpreters were conveying their own messages and misconveying our intent."

*General*
- Frequency/placement of training
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the frequency or placement of pre-deployment use of interpreter training.
    - "It generally only occurred as an isolated event (i.e., the training themes and relevant skills were not reinforced throughout the pre-deployment training process.)"
- Importance of training with interpreter prior to deployment
  - Definition: This applies to discussion about the importance of the team/unit training with an interpreter prior to deployment.
    - "Training to use terps or translators is critically important and something we rehearsed before each Special Forces (18) mission and each Civil Affairs mission. Practice with the terp ensured critical messages and information was accurately conveyed, in addition we conducted backbriefs to discuss the subtleties of the conversation after the engagement. In addition we would have a choice of terps and use different terps for different missions - studs who could walk and older terps for cultural acceptance in negotiations. I have studied use of terps extensively because it is that important to mission success."
- General comment about interpreters
  - Definition: This applies to any comment made about interpreters that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - "We were able to work with our terps for three months CONUS before deployment. Most of them were born and raised in the AOR."
- General statement about importance of training
  - Definition: This applies to any general statement about the importance of pre-deployment interpreter training that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - "As with all operations training is training and the reality of what you encounter when you get to your AO will determine how you actually utilize your interpreter. Training is always useful to get one's mind engaged on a topic that may come up on a mission."
- Positive statement about training received
  - Definition: This applies to any positive statement about the pre-deployment interpreter training received that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - "It gave us a chance to use key phrase during training."
- Negative statement about training received
  - Definition: This applies to any negative statement about the pre-deployment interpreter training received that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - "It was minimal at best and during the deployment the terps were rotated out."

- General statement about training received
  - Definition: This applies to any general statements about the pre-deployment interpreter training received that is not captured by any other code in this section.
    - "We received training and practice during STX lanes in the use of interpreters in tactical and teaching environments."
- Other
  - Definition: This applies to any statement about pre-deployment interpreter training that is not captured by any other code in this section.
    - "It's difficult to prepare for the language barrier that will exist between you and the person you will be communicating with through the interpreter, and the confusion which will naturally arise. This just takes experience to overcome."
- N/A/Not relevant/No comment
  - Definition: This applies to any statement that is not directly relevant to the question, or in which respondents indicated "Not applicable" or "no comment."
    - "We got the job done"

**Comments and recommendations on use of CAT I interpreters**

- Trust/security concerns
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about trust and security issues in relation to CAT I interpreters.
    "CAT 1 Terps in a SOF environment is like playing with fire, you need them but you can get burned very easily if your not OPSEC minded."
- Selection process
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the process used to select CAT I interpreters.
    - "Great as long as you can vett them properly. Even better if vetting has already been done and they have verifiable experience and references."
- Variance in quality
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the variance in quality among CAT I interpreters.
    "I have used many CAT 1 terps and their skills and trustworthiness varied wildly between individuals."
- Need or lack military/technical knowledge
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters lack military and/or technical knowledge and vocabulary.
    - "CAT 1 interpreters need to have some sort of tactical proficiency before deploying with a SOF element. Certain commands that need to be conveyed verbatim are not understood because of a gap in tactical experience."

- Not enough interpreters to go around
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that there are too few CAT I interpreters to meet SOF needs.
    - ▪ "As a leader on the ground I can assess the performance of the interpreter. I do not need any training to be able to determine if the interpreter is good or not. We just did not have enough terps to train the ANA,ANP,ASG, manage the workers at the base, run the radio station, conduct missions, all at the same time...."
- Contractor issues
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the contractors providing interpreters to SOF.
    - ▪ "It is not the linguist who present the problem, it is the US Contractor.  GLS"

*English Proficiency*
- English proficiency
  - o Definition: This applies to general comments about the English proficiency of CAT I interpreters.
    - ▪ "make sure they know enough English to properly translate"
- Good English proficiency
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters have good/adequate English proficiency.
    - ▪ "…The best CAT 1 interpreter that I have ever used had a very strong command of English and host nation language, had a great understanding of cultural nuances on both sides, and transferred emotion as if he was talking directly to the individual himself, translating what I told him to."
- Poor English proficiency
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters have poor/inadequate English proficiency.
    - ▪ "Make sure they have proper English to target language proficiency.  Many of them lack the fluid transfer of information due to their limited ability to speak/comprehend English."

*Target Language Proficiency*
- Target language proficiency
  - o Definition: This applies to any general discussion of CAT I interpreters' proficiency in the target/area language, including discussion of desired state.
    - ▪ "Greatest constraint has always been less their trustworthiness than their basic competence as an interpreter and their proficiency in English and the required language."

- Good target language proficiency
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters have high/adequate proficiency in the target/area language.
        - "Typically CAT I interpreters have been working with SOF since the kick off of OEF and are very proficient English speakers as well as know more than 1 language within the OEF AOR. They can be utilized with much greater effect than CAT II/III often can be. If the mission doesn't require a CAT II/III then one should use a CAT I since they usually have the best knowledge of the local area/populace/language."
- Poor target language proficiency
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters have poor/inadequate proficiency in the target/area language.
        - "They need to do a better job of vetting them. Often times I get interpreters who cant read (English or native language ), and do not understand English to the extent I need them to for messages to be effectively translated. It seems sometimes people are content to hire any warm body that can speak elementary level English. I also think they should prioritize the distribution of interpreters with the requirements of units. IE younger/ fitter interpreters to SF, articulate multilingual literate interpreters to PSYOP."
- Regional dialect issues
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters were not proficient in the dialect of an area.
        - "There is always a question of dialects and the pronouncing/meaning of the word(s) content/usage, which causes the greatest of problems."

*Use in combat situation*
- Use in combat situation
    - Definition: This applies to any general discussion about the use of CAT I interpreters in combat situations.
        - "CAT 1 interpreters should be allowed to progress to a CAT 2. As I understand it CAT 1s can not progress to another category regardless of experience. In my opinion, if a local hire terp proves themselves in combat with the team and has two or three years of SOF experience then they should be eligible to be a CAT 2 thereby increasing their pay and responsibility."
- Should be able to authorize interpreters to carry weapons
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters should be allowed to carry/use weapons while working with SOF operators.
        - "ODAs should be able to make the judgment (or request authorization) to arm CAT I terps during operations."
- Not effective in combat situations
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are not effective in combat situations.
        - "Cat 1 interpreters should not be used in combat situations"

- Effective in combat situations
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are effective in combat situations.
        - "My interpreter was THE KEY for my mission success. The most important part of the equation. Totally trust worthy and a great fighter to boot!"

*CAT I interpreters are better*
- CAT I interpreters better than CAT II/III interpreters
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are better than CAT II/III interpreters for SOF missions.
        - "CAT I interpreters are usually better than CAT II or III for work on the ground."
- Awareness of local area
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are better than CAT II/III interpreters because of their knowledge and awareness of the local area.
        - "CAT 1 interpreters are extremely more effective than CAT 2. they understand the local culture and dialects which greatly aid in mission accomplishment."

*CAT II/III interpreters are better*
- CAT II/III interpreters better than CAT I interpreters
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are better than CAT I interpreters for SOF missions.
        - "CAT II is preferred, trouble often follows the use of CAT I terps"
- Better for high-security missions
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are better for high-security missions.
        - "Typically we use CAT I interpreters for FID training or dealing with local personalities, anything that is sensitive in nature we use CAT II interpreters"

*Use of interpreter training*
- Use of interpreter training needed
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that training on the use of interpreters is needed, or that teams need to train with their interpreters prior to using them on a mission.
        - "During pre-deployment, teach the skill of how to employ them. Focus on basics like choosing simple words, transmitting in bursts, not drawling like a redneck, and the difference between interpretation (speak on my behalf: get across the concept that I want to communicate) and translation (say what I say verbatim)."

- Use of interpreter training effective
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that training on the use of interpreters was effective.
    - ▪ "…SFQC taught a fantastic course on working with interpreters that I remember to this day.  CAT I interpreters treated in a professional manner perform to standard.  CAT I interpreters babied or given false promises of citizenship or special favors fail consistently.  This is a unit commander responsibility.  Afghanis speak with a forked tongue and will not lose face so other non verbal indicators must be analyzed based on each situation."

*General*

- Teams should select interpreter
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that the SOF team/unit should be able to select the interpreter(s) that are used
    - ▪ "Allow teams to hire their own terps. The "official" terp contractor out of KAF was skimming funds and posed a threat to the terps' personal OPSEC."
- No changes needed
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that current system for obtaining and maintaining CAT I interpreters is adequate/functional.
    - ▪ "Keep the ones that have been there already instead of looking for new ones. they can be very helpful and useful as they are usually from that area or within the area that know how the people are."
- Cultural/ethnic/religious/tribal issues
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about problems with CAT I interpreters stemming from cultural, ethnic, religious, or tribal issues and concerns.
    - ▪ "In my experience in IRAQ...we had several "IRAQI" interpreters and also had a handful from Jordan and Egypt. The Local Iraqi people we would have relations with did not take kindly to the interpreters from other countries and often would not want to work with the non- Iraqi interpreters. I think it is always better to hire local nationals if you are going to be interacting with locals."
- Health/physical fitness
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the health and/or physical fitness of CAT I interpreters.
    - ▪ "Do the best possible job you can to find background information and his reputation before he is hired on. Do all his body parts function correctly? Will be become a medical problem for you if he goes on a DA mission. Does he have any chronic illnesses which may preclude him from doing his job."
- Building situational awareness
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the use of CAT I interpreters for building situational awareness.
    - ▪ "make sure if your attempting to convey urgency, or some sort of tone in your intended correspondence you explain it to the interpreter.  Or else the wont convey it."

- Cultural awareness
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the use of CAT I interpreters for building cultural awareness.
    - ▪ "They can be an extremely valuable resource in understanding culture as well. We had highly paid and highly educated US Citizen/Iraqi-born cultural advisors, however sometimes they would miss things that were prevalent in today's Iraq because they had been removed from their home country for decades."
- Rapport
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about rapport, including the use of CAT I interpreters for building rapport with locals and the importance of the SOF team building rapport with the interpreter.
    - ▪ "CAT I interpreters can be an asset by having knowledge of the local area and customs. They are also useful for establishing rapport because they are seen as 'One of us' by our partners."
- Awareness of agenda/personal motivation
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the importance of recognizing the agenda and personal motivation of CAT I interpreters for cooperating with the U.S. military and/or the awareness that CAT I interpreters may not understand the agenda/motivation of SOF personnel.
    - ▪ "Everyone must understand that CAT1s have their own agendas that might not 100% mesh with yours/US Army."
- CAT I interpreters should not be selected from immediate vicinity
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the importance of not selecting CAT I interpreters from the immediate vicinity/local area.
    - ▪ "Afghanistan is a complex country with different cultures, languages and tribes and from there comes the majority of our TERPS. I believe the TERP has to be from OUTSIDE the AO that is working in order to have a loyal and 'Close' TERP to your command or directions. / Otherwise a LOCAL TERP could be (and is) compromise by tribal connection, treat, family security, fear or death."
- Teams should not use interpreters
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that SOF members should not use interpreters. This includes any discussion regarding the current/ideal language proficiency of SOF operators.
    - ▪ "Use of this level of terps has become a crutch. If proper planning at the HQ level were used to effect manageable mission loads, ODAs would not have an excuse to use terps but be expected to execute training in their target language. It is a problem affected by multiple factors."
- Should only use CAT II/III interpreters
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that SOF personnel should exclusively use CAT II/III interpreters.
    - ▪ "Use only CAT II/III interpreters"

- Pay issues
    - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about pay issues related to CAT I interpreters, including both overpayment and underpayment.
        - ▪ "Do not continue to cut the pay that the receive. They are a very valuable resource"
- Limited or no experience with CAT I interpreters
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that they have limited or no experience using CAT I interpreters.
        - ▪ "never used"
- General positive comment
    - o Definition: This applies to any positive comment about CAT I interpreters that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - ▪ "The CAT Is assigned to us have worked with us out of the same FOB for years. Great relationship. Great trust."
- General negative comment
    - o Definition: This applies to any negative comment about CAT I interpreters that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - ▪ "In 2001, they were great. We worked with the Northern Alliance 'General/Warlords/Druglords'. The 'Generals' provided/recommended their own CAT I terps for us. You had a sense that they were happy to work with us and that they had pride in helping us to gain control of their country from the Taliban. Now, in 2009, they are just kids, with little pride in what they are doing. Its all about the money. They want to do contract work outside of their normal duties. They are leeches with no commitment to our mission. They are full of drama and compete with other terps and try to force out terps they don't like (the ones getting the contracts). They simply could care less if Afghanistan succeeds. They just want our money. I've had to fire three of them already. Easily replaced. They are a dime a dozen."
- Effectiveness depends on mission
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that the effectiveness of CAT I interpreters is dependent upon the particular mission type.
        - ▪ "As long as CAT I terps stay in the realm of FID or training, then they are extremely useful. They can also go on missions to ask, generalized non-sensitive questions."
- Need to treat CAT I interpreters with respect/professionalism
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters need to be treated with respect and/or professionalism in order to ensure acceptable performance.
        - ▪ "SFQC taught a fantastic course on working with interpreters that I remember to this day. CAT I interpreters treated in a professional manner perform to standard."

- Should only be used as last resort
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters should only be used if no other options are available for linguistic needs.
        - "Use them only when you have to."
- Interpreters need more/additional training
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreters need more or additional training, including target language training, English language training, military training, etc.
        - "The problem with the use my CAT I interpreters was the lack of military knowledge in our profession. I would recommend that those interpreters participate with a pre-mission training with the assigned organization they will work with on missions."
- Other
    - Definition: This applies to any other comments about CAT I interpreters that are not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - "Make it easier for these brave men and women to visit the US and possible citizenship, military service, etc."

- N/A/Not relevant/No comment
    - Definition: This applies to any statement that is not directly relevant to the question, or in which respondents indicated "Not applicable" or "no comment."
        - "No comments at this time"


**Comments and recommendations on use of CAT II/III interpreters**

- Trust/security concerns
    - Definition: This applies to any discussion about trust and security issues in relation to CAT II/III interpreters.
        - "Still realize OPSEC needs to be enforced."
- Selection/vetting process
    - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the process used to vet CAT II/III interpreters.
        - "Properly vet them for their specific assignments."
- Variance in quality
    - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the variance in quality among CAT II/III interpreters.
        - "Skill and capability vary from terp to terp. 90% of all my terps were regarded as trustworthy and very competent. The other 10% varied from average to almost worthless."
- No military/technical knowledge
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters lack military and/or technical knowledge and vocabulary.
        - "If CAT II/III are local terps then they are may not know military lingo or tell you what conversations are being said between HN"

- Not enough interpreters to go around
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that there are too few CAT II/III interpreters to meet SOF needs.
    - ▪ "Need more CAT II & III interpreters"
- Contractor issues
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion about the contractors providing interpreters to SOF, including any discussion about difficulties encountered in removing poorly performing CAT II/III interpreters from the team/unit or interpreter pool.
    - ▪ "My suggestion is to look at the contracting companies and their hiring procedures.  As it stands, I am short one interpreter.   We have had to release 4 interpreters that GLS has attempted to fill our vacant CATII position.  This is due to that the terps that they provided could not type, nor speak English proficiently."

*English Proficiency*

- English proficiency
  - o Definition: This applies to general comments about the English proficiency of CAT II/III interpreters.
    - ▪ "Without the use of CAT II and III interpreters the force would be at a loss;  / We must continue to groom them back in the states to master the English Language; They can also be used as language instructors for their native dialects prior to deploying (if applicable);"
- Good English proficiency
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters have good/adequate English proficiency.
    - ▪ "The few we used had been in the US for years and their English was excellent."
- Poor English proficiency
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters have poor/inadequate English proficiency.
    - ▪ "The main problem with interpreters has been their English proficiency.  It is hard to tell it they are deliberately concealing information or just don't know how to express it in English."

*Target Language Proficiency*

- Target language proficiency
  - o Definition: This applies to any discussion of CAT II/III interpreters' proficiency in the target/area language.
    - ▪ "make sure that they can speak, listen and read the language of the area you are working in"

- Good target language proficiency
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters have high/adequate proficiency in the target/area language.
    - "Understood both languages well, which made translating easier and words did not get lose during important meeting."
- Poor target language proficiency
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters have poor/inadequate proficiency in the target/area language.
    - "Just make sure that they haven't been in the US for 15+ years. Some of them have forgotten much of the language. Even though they speak/understand English very well, they actually have a hard time speaking in the target language."
- Regional dialect issues
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters were not proficient in the dialect of an area.
    - "In countries with multiple dialects, the proficiency in one dialect will not allow that interpreter to be sufficient in the other dialects. This was a recurring issue; i.e. Dari and Urdu."

*Use in combat situation*

- Should be able to carry weapons
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters should be allowed to carry/use weapons while working with SOF operators.
    - "CAT II/III should be able to (trained by their USSF team) drive vehicles, carry weapons, and receive training on all weapon systems. / / CAT II/III should be assigned to deploying team before any PMT. This will insure coordination and SOPs are worked out before entering a hostile environment."
- Not effective in combat situations
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are not effective in combat situations.
    - "CATII/III interpreters provide different challenges when fielding them during operations. One, they lack tactical knowledge and they are not seasoned fighters compared to their CATI counterparts. During close encounters with the enemy, they will need to be protected and be told what to do. Also, they have to be vetted. In my experience in Afghanistan, some CATII/III interpreters held too much power with the locals because they constantly have to help SOF with local leader meetings and things of the like. That puts their status in a completely different playing field and some abuse that status."

*Cultural Awareness*
- Cultural awareness
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the use of CAT II/III interpreters for building cultural awareness.
    - "Absolutely necessary for accomplishment of the PSYOP mission when dealing in languages not normally trained or understood by U.S. forces. CAT III required for access to classified products for translation, cultural advice on products, and understanding of the intent of the PSYOP Mission."
- CAT II/III interpreters lack current cultural awareness
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the fact that CAT II/III interpreters lack current awareness about the culture of the region.
    - "The 'cultural advisors' we used were contracted US citizens of foreign (AOR) descent. They were generally long-time residents of the US, even up to 40 years. This seemed to cause them to be somewhat out-of-touch with the current culture and language."

*CAT I interpreters are better*
- CAT I interpreters better
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are better than CAT II/III interpreters for SOF missions.
    - "During my last trip, using one of the CAT II interpreters was more of a hindrance and burden than using a CAT I."
- Awareness of local area
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are better than CAT II/III interpreters because of their knowledge and awareness of the local area.
    - "One of our CAT I interpreters spoke at a CAT II/III interpreters level of understanding and was generally more considerate of the Afghan situation than many of the CAT II/III and provided a broader perspective of the perceptions relating to civil affairs."

*CAT II/III interpreters are better*
- CAT II/III interpreters better
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are better than CAT I interpreters for SOF missions.
    - "Always preferred over CAT I Terps."
- Better for high-security missions
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are better than CAT I interpreters for high-security missions.
    - "Utilize CAT II / III interpreters in important KLE i.e. government officials and ASO operations."

*Use of interpreter training*

- Comment about use of interpreter training
  - Definition: This applies to any general comment about use of interpreter training that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - "I feel that the training they receive is to standard, the problem lies in the soldiers that use them. Since there are many soldiers that are not using their language skills since they lack language skills, these soldiers give the interpreters to much power and let the interpreters control the situation. The problem that I have had with interpreters is retraining them to work the way I want them too and to take back the control that other soldiers have given them."
- Use of interpreter training needed
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that training on the use of interpreters is needed, or that teams need to train with their interpreters prior to using them on a mission.
    - "I under utilized the Terps because I was not aware of their level until well into my mission set. Should have been briefed on their use before hand."

*General*

- Team should select interpreter
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that the SOF team/unit should be able to select the interpreter(s) that are used
    - "For the team that requires the use of these types of interpreters, my recommendation would be to have the team leadership interview potential candidates to ensure that they can meet established standards...before hiring them and assigning them to a team."
- No changes needed
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that current system for obtaining and maintaining CAT II/III interpreters is adequate/functional.
    - "Current policies are sufficient for our mission."
- Cultural/religious/ethnic/tribal issues
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about problems with CAT II/III interpreters stemming from cultural, ethnic, religious, or tribal issues and concerns.
    - "Our terp was Lebanese and female.  Not very liked with local male leadership"
- Health/physical fitness
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the health and/or physical fitness of CAT II/III interpreters.
    - "We were sent an interpreter who was almost 60 yrs old and had extremely high blood pressure, poor health and could have had a heart attack any time especially with the low standards of food we had at our fire base"

- Building situational awareness
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the use of CAT II/III interpreters for building situational awareness.
    - "Have them make good use of their down time. They should be listening/watching radio and TV broadcasts of news shows and current events and reading local newspapers and magazines. This will give them some background and situational awareness of what is going on around them. I have noticed that many of the interpreters never or very seldom leave camp so they don't know what the local atmospherics are."
- Rapport
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about rapport, including the use of CAT II/III interpreters for building rapport with locals and the importance of the SOF team building rapport with the interpreter.
    - "With CAT II/III interpreters what is more important than language ability is personality. These individuals must be able to quickly relate to the indigenous person who is the object of an engagement. The interpreter must be able to put this person at ease while also maintaining the appropriate level and formality during a conversation. CAT II/III interpreters are absolutely essential to building and maintaining rapport. If they do not have an agreeable personality, they are ineffective regardless of their language ability."
- Awareness of agenda/personal motivation
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about the importance of recognizing the agenda and personal motivation of CAT II/III interpreters for cooperating with the U.S. military and/or the awareness that CAT II/III interpreters may not understand the agenda/motivation of SOF personnel.
    - "Although the interpreters were competent they all had very strong opinions and many of them could not conceal their personnel agendas in negations."
- Team should not need interpreters
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that SOF members should not need to use interpreters. This includes any discussion regarding the current/ideal language proficiency of SOF operators.
    - "I understand the need for CAT II terps but why not just invest in soldiers and ensure they are more proficient in a certain language. The clearance is already there and even with CAT II/III alot still gets lost in translation"
- Pay issues
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion about pay issues related to CAT II/III interpreters, including both overpayment and underpayment.
    - "I find that CAT II and above are more interested in the money than in your (or their) mission. Also, by paying them 10x the amount as we pay CAT Is they have a heightened sense of importance and demotivate the CAT Is who are often more effective anyway."

- No or limited experience with CAT II/III interpreters
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that they have no or limited experience with CAT II/III interpreters.
        - ▪ "only used one"
- General positive comment
    - o Definition: This applies to any positive comment about CAT II/III interpreters that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - ▪ "Extremely valuable, especially over time when a lot of their other skill sets are identified."
- General negative comment
    - o Definition: This applies to any negative comment about CAT II/III interpreters that is not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - ▪ "Most are just plain bad and unfortunately, no one even knows it since most operators don't even have the most basic understanding of the foreign language."
- Reluctant to work in combat/high-risk situation
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are reluctant to work in combat or other high-risk situations.
        - ▪ "Do not like to patrol and put their life at risk. Just want to sit on a firebase and get paid twice as much as soldiers."
- Effectiveness dependent on situation/mission
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that the effectiveness of CAT II/III interpreters is dependent upon the particular mission type.
        - ▪ cat II/III terps are best used for gathering and processing intel. we patrolled with at least one cat II/III terp."
- CAT II/III interpreters are lazy/feel entitled
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are lazy and unwilling to work, or feel entitled to special privileges.
        - ▪ "Almost all the one's I've worked with were fat and lazy. Being a hindrance on missions, an not a enabler"
- CAT II/III interpreters are trustworthy
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are trustworthy.
        - ▪ "THE CAT III TERPS I HAVE WORKED WITH ARE TRUSTWORTHY AND VERY CONFIDENT. THEY JUST NEED TO BE TAILORED TO THE ODA'S NEEDS."
- Interpreters need more/additional training
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreters need more or additional training, including target language training, English language training, military training, etc.
        - ▪ "Again you must train the interpreters on military knowledge, terms and operations. Train them on what you are doing and how to do it."
- Other
    - o Definition: This applies to any other comments about CAT II/III interpreters that are not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - ▪ "Many have poor typing and computer skills."

- N/A/Not relevant/No comment
    - Definition: This applies to any statement that is not directly relevant to the question, or in which respondents indicated "Not applicable" or "no comment."
        - "No comment"


**Why type of interpreter preferred depends on mission**

*Prefer 09L*
- General preference for 09L
    - Definition: Respondent indicates a general preference for 09L interpreters that does not fit into any other 09L code.
        - "An 09L is more appropriate for actions on the objective than a CATII/CATIII."
- For local area language proficiency
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that 09Ls are preferred for their local area language proficiency.
        - "…On a DA type mission, a 09L or CAT I with language ability and the dialect will be of more benefit…"
- For inside AOR missions
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that 09Ls are preferred for inside AOR missions.
        - "Class 1/09L inside AOR and Class 2/3 Outside."
- For combat situations
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that 09Ls are preferred for combat situations.
        - "If it is a DA or SR mission, I would prefer using a 09L, who is a soldier that speaks the native language and trained in military tactics. If it was any other operation using a CAT II or III would be better due to understanding of the culture."
- For non-combat situations
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that 09Ls are preferred for non-combat situations.
        - "09L could possibly be more suited for training indigenous forces; however, rather 09 or CAT, it comes down to the personality of the interpreter."
- For sensitive/high-security missions
    - Definition: Respondent indicates that 09Ls are preferred for sensitive or high-security missions.
        - "It is good to have a local terp sometimes because he understands the local populace better than a 09L who has never been to the country or region that you are operating in.  / The 09L and CatII terp are good for sensitive information translation and interpretation"

*Prefer CAT I interpreter*
- General preference for CAT I interpreter
  - Definition: Respondent indicates a general preference for CAT I interpreters that does not fit into any other CAT I interpreter code.
    - "from experience, I would like to use a person of the AOR who is living there, for any village leader I am concersating with will feel more relax then having a person born in that country but from the USA."
- For local area language proficiency
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for their local area language proficiency.
    - "Some locals have the rapport already established to give a leader an 'inside track' on things. The CAT I may have local 'mother tongue' knowledge that would be hard to find somewhere else. For example, areas of Africa that have multiple languages in additional to the colonial language."
- For inside AOR missions
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for inside AOR missions.
    - "CAT II or III outside AOR, inside AOR CAT I if needed at all"
- For outside AOR missions
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for outside AOR missions.
    - "cat 1 for outside of AOR"
- For combat situations
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for combat situations.
    - "I would prefer a CAT I for direct action missions and Tactical Questioning because of the intensity of the situation, it does not matter where he is from. I prefer to use my CAT II/III's for meetings and social settings."
- For non-combat situations
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for non-combat situations.
    - "In combat operations CAT II or above. Conducting JCETS a mix of CAT 1 and limited CAT 2 or above.  Conducting FID with CDO in a training environment CAT I, however, as soon as you start combat FID CAT II or above"
- For knowledge of local area/culture/customs
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for their knowledge of the local area, culture, and customs.
    - "As long as the CAT I interpreters and properly vetted I would use rather use them. This is because they better understand the culture and the customs of the area.  That can be just as useful as knowing the language."

- For non-sensitive/low security missions
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters are preferred for non-sensitive or low-security missions.
        - ▪ "CAT I interpreters are usually acceptable for FID training. But, CAT II/III interpreters are necessary for more sensitive types of missions."

*Prefer CAT II/III interpreter*

- General preference for CAT II/III interpreter
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates a general preference for CAT II/III interpreters that does not fit into any other CAT II/III interpreter code.
        - ▪ "Of course one prefers at CAT II/III interpreter, but I can understand that those are limited, and sometimes the mission doesn't warrant that high a level of interpreter..."
- For inside AOR missions
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are preferred for inside AOR missions.
        - ▪ "Inside the AOR: I prefer a vetted terp / Outside the AOR: I prefer a vetted terp but I'll take a non-vetted terp if the situation requires it"
- For outside AOR missions
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are preferred for outside AOR missions.
        - ▪ "Missions outside AOR, I would be more comfortable using a CAT II terp because they are generally more competent and trust worthy..."
- For combat situations
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are preferred for combat situations.
        - ▪ "In a combat environment where my life depends on my ability to communicate to the local populace; I would want a CAT II/III (or 09L) Interpreter, because I can trust that they have been thoroughly vetted and can convey the information I want to put out in the most understandable way to the local populace..."
- For non-combat situations
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are preferred for non-combat situations.
        - ▪ "Normally the CAT I's are more physically fit and can keep pace with a combat unit. If conducting a Shura, a CAT II will suffice because there is not near the physical demands."
- For knowledge of local area/culture/customs
    - o Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are preferred for their knowledge of the local area, culture, and customs.
        - ▪ "sometimes a 09L is more trustworthy, but a CAT II/III usually has more contextual knowledge and is able to build rapport more easily than a 09L"

- For sensitive missions/high security missions
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT II/III interpreters are preferred for sensitive or high-security missions.
    > "Some information is classified while executing a mission.  Thus, a CAT II/III is necessary in order to read or copy classified material..."

*General operational security (OPSEC) issues*
- General operational security (OPSEC) issues
  - Definition: This applies to any discussion of general operational security issues in relation to interpreter use.
    > "ONCE OPERATIONAL, NEED TO HAVE AN INTERPRETER WHO CAN WORK WITHIN THE SECURITY CALSSIFICATION OF THE MISSION, IN ORDER TO NOT COMPROMISE THE OPERATION - TRAINING SITUATIONS MAY WARRANT THAT AS WELL."
- CAT I interpreters pose security risk
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that CAT I interpreters pose a security risk.
    - "In Iraq we had both CAT I, CAT II and III interpreters. We preferred the CAT III interpreters as they were much more trustworthy, and we knew, that being US citizens, they had a much more vested interested in our safety and the overall success of the mission. However, in Thailand, having a local interpreter who knew the leadership we were working with and had a pre-existing relationship, made it easier to interact with them. Unfortunately, it became very clear to us, that some of the locals we were working with were actively trying to gather intelligence on us and subsequent operations and deployments. Although this is quite common, it was blatant enough that interpreters and drivers had to be replaced which caused a loss of valuable training time."

*General statement about interpreter choice being dependent on situation*
- General statement about interpreter choice being dependent on situation
  - Definition: This applies to any general discussion about the choice of interpreter being dependent on the situation that is not captured by any of the other codes in this section.
    - "Depends on the type and scope of the mission"
- Combat/non-combat
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on whether it is a combat or a non-combat mission.
    - "The type of mission (combat vs. peace time FID) determines who you get as interpreters and how well they will do their jobs. /  / I have had good experiences with both types but my experiences with 09Ls and US citizen contractors has been in a wartime environment and it is not fair to judge them compared to interpreters working in a non-hostile environment, apples and oranges."

- Sensitivity of information
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on the sensitivity of the information/security level of the mission.
    - "It all falls back on sensitivity of the mission and the ability to execute objectives with low risk of compromise."
- Trustworthiness
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on the trustworthiness of the interpreter.
    - "Depending on the mission the credibility of the terp is in question as well, local nationals are still trusted over US citizens in most situations."
- Difficulty of language/translation
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on the difficulty of the language or the specific translations required.
    - "There are various different types of translating and interpreting tasks and each one requires a different skill set. For interpreting (oral) from native language to English, a CAT 1, 2 or 3 would be sufficient. For interpreting from English to native language, a CAT 2 or 3 would be necessary. They generally understand English better and can better convey those thoughts and ideas in their language better than a CAT 1. For translating (written) from English to native language, a CAT 1, 2 or 3 would be sufficient, provided that the translations are cross checked with other interpreters. For translating from native language to English a 09L will be required because they are generally fluent in written and spoken English and functional enough in their other language to translate it. Even CAT 2 and 3 interpreters have difficulty writing in English to sufficiently capture the ideas being put forth."
- Health/physical fitness
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on the health and/or physical fitness of the interpreter and/or the physical requirements of the mission.
    - "CAT II/IIIs that I have worked with rarely had the physical prowess to accompany SOF operators, so they were worthless on an operational mission. However, if I was going to drink shai, smoke sheesha, and build rapport with Arab HN or military forces, the CAT II/III was best for communicating precisely."

*General*

- Interpreter choice dependent on availability of interpreter
  - Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on what interpreters are available.
    - "CAT I's are much easier to get (and cheaper) in forward areas. Prioritization of these scarce resources will always dictate allocation."

- Interpreter choice dependent on target audience
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that interpreter choice depends on the target audience.
    - ▪ "The type of interpreter to utilize depending on AOR is important due to religious, tribal, provincial reasons. Having an interpreter from an outside AOR can hinder and sometimes halt conversations and relationships within an AOR."
- Prefer language skills on team so that interpreters are not needed
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that he/she would prefer language skills at the team/unit level so that interpreters are not required for missions.
    - ▪ "I would prefer to use the best available. If a 09L can do the job with the same amount of accuracy and cultural understanding as the CATI, then I would prefer that. I would MOST prefer language skills to be organic to the team. Inside my team AOR we don't need terps, several of the detachment members are very proficient in the language."
- General statement about 09Ls
  - o Definition: This applies to any statements about 09L interpreters that are not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - ▪ "A 09L can be used to vet your interpreters but they might not be as aware of certain situations that a local interpreter would."
- General statement about CAT I interpreter
  - o Definition: This applies to any statements about CAT I interpreters that are not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - ▪ "Our designated CAT I interpreter was introspective regarding the Civil Affairs mission in Afghanistan, more so than many CAT II/III interpreters."
- General statement about CAT II/III interpreter
  - o Definition: This applies to any statements about CAT II/III interpreters that are not captured by any other codes in this section.
    - ▪ "remember CAT I terps are locals, CAT II terps may not be completely proficient in their job."
- Depends on whether mission is inside AOR or outside AOR
  - o Definition: Respondent indicates that he/she does not need an interpreter for inside AOR missions because of adequate AOR language proficiency, but an interpreter is required for outside AOR missions, OR indicates that he/she prefers one type of interpreter for use inside the AOR and a different type of interpreter for use outside the AOR
    - ▪ "Inside AOR there is no need for me to use interpreter. Outside I would definitely use a combination of local and class II/III to confirm and verify validity of translation."

- Other
    - Definition: This applies to any other statement about interpreter preference not captured by any other codes in this section.
        - "I have seen a negligible difference between CAT I and CAT II terps, other than security clearance. I have not needed to choose between one or the other."
- N/A/Not relevant/No comment
    - Definition: This applies to any statement that is not directly relevant to the question, or in which respondents indicated "Not applicable" or "no comment."
        - "N/A"

## APPENDIX E: FREQUENCY OF INTERPRETER USE

*Appendix E, Table 1.* SOF Operator Inside AOR Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 118 | 3.52 | 22% | 3% | 14% | 21% | 39% |
| **AFSOC** | 9 | 3.00 | 22% | 22% | 11% | 22% | 22% |
| **MARSOC** | 14 | 4.14 | 29% | 0% | 21% | 21% | 29% |
| **WARCOM** | 9 | 4.00 | 0% | 11% | 11% | 44% | 33% |
| **USASOC** | 716 | 3.40 | 24% | 6% | 14% | 19% | 37% |
| *CA* | 122 | 3.23 | 26% | 7% | 14% | 22% | 30% |
| *MISG* | 106 | 3.35 | 25% | 8% | 16% | 12% | 40% |
| *SF* | 478 | 3.44 | 23% | 5% | 14% | 21% | 37% |
| **TSOC** | 13 | 3.62 | 15% | 15% | 8% | 15% | 46% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 53 | 3.53 | 13% | 9% | 23% | 21% | 34% |
| **Other** | 63 | 3.52 | 14% | 11% | 21% | 16% | 38% |

*Note.* Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., JSOC) were omitted.  1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Appendix E, Table 2.* SOF Leader Inside AOR Interpreter Use by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Inside AOR Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 36 | 4.19 | 8% | 6% | 3% | 25% | 58% |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 3.40 | 20% | 20% | 0% | 20% | 40% |
| **USASOC** | 231 | 3.91 | 12% | 3% | 14% | 23% | 48% |
| *CA* | 21 | 4.05 | 5% | 9% | 9% | 29% | 48% |
| *MISG* | 26 | 3.85 | 8% | 0% | 19% | 46% | 27% |
| *SF* | 163 | 3.98 | 13% | 2% | 13% | 17% | 55% |
| **TSOC** | 24 | 3.54 | 13% | 4% | 29% | 25% | 29% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 31 | 3.68 | 3% | 26% | 13% | 16% | 42% |
| **Other** | 19 | 4.05 | 0% | 11% | 11% | 42% | 37% |

*Note.* Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted. 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

**APPENDIX F: RELIANCE ON INTERPRETERS**

*Appendix F, Table 1.* SOF Leader Ratings of Dependency on Interpreters Inside the AOR by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | **Dependency on Interpreters - Inside AOR** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Not dependent** | **Slightly dependent** | **Moderately dependent** | **Dependent** | **Very dependent** |
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 3.40 | 20% | 20% | 0% | 20% | 40% |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 36 | 3.69 | 8% | 8% | 17% | 39% | 28% |
| **USASOC** | 230 | 3.44 | 15% | 13% | 16% | 25% | 31% |
| CA | 21 | 3.38 | 10% | 19% | 19% | 29% | 24% |
| MISG | 26 | 3.46 | 12% | 8% | 23% | 38% | 19% |
| SF | 163 | 3.49 | 15% | 13% | 15% | 23% | 34% |
| **TSOC** | 24 | 3.08 | 9% | 22% | 30% | 22% | 17% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 30 | 3.60 | 10% | 13% | 17% | 27% | 33% |
| **Other** | 19 | 3.95 | 0% | 13% | 19% | 25% | 44% |

*Note.* Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted. 1 = *Not dependent*, 2 = *Slightly dependent*, 3 = *Moderately dependent*, 4 = *Dependent*, 5 = *Very dependent*

*Appendix F, Table 2.* SOF Leader Ratings of Importance of Interpreters Inside the AOR by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

**Importance of Interpreters - Inside AOR**

| Group | *n* | Mean | Not important | Slightly important | Moderately important | Important | Very important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MARSOC** | 5 | 3.80 | 20% | 0% | 0% | 40% | 40% |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 36 | 4.00 | 8% | 3% | 14% | 31% | 44% |
| **USASOC** | 230 | 3.67 | 11% | 10% | 17% | 27% | 36% |
| *CA* | 21 | 3.71 | 10% | 10% | 19% | 24% | 38% |
| *MISG* | 26 | 3.96 | 8% | 0% | 15% | 42% | 35% |
| *SF* | 163 | 3.62 | 11% | 12% | 17% | 25% | 36% |
| **TSOC** | 24 | 3.33 | 8% | 13% | 33% | 29% | 17% |
| **Deployed SO Unit** | 30 | 3.87 | 7% | 10% | 13% | 30% | 40% |
| **Other** | 19 | 4.00 | 0% | 11% | 21% | 26% | 42% |

*Note.* Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted. 1 = *Not important*, 2 = *Slightly important*, 3 = *Moderately important*, 4 = *Important*, 5 = *Very important*

**APPENDIX G: OTHER SPECIFIC TASKS FOR USING INTERPRETERS**

By indicating "other" to the item asking which tasks interpreters are used for in cases where proficiency is lacking, SOF operators had the opportunity to provide additional tasks that were not included in the item's response options . Responses to this item can be placed into several categories. Exemplar statements are listed for each category; please note that these statements are not corrected for spelling or grammatical errors.

- Work with MISG products and messages
    - "Translate PSYOP Products"
    - "Develop PSYOP media"
- Conduct meetings and negotiations
    - "Talk on phone to local senior officials"
    - "Participate in local meetings"
- Translation
    - "translate and review documents"
    - "translate pages, enemy propaganda and radio messages"
- Cultural guidance
    - "Provide general cultural knowledge"
    - "Help me to further my knowledge of local customs and courtesies."
- Learning the language
    - "teach language to team, check our language use"
    - "As to teach common words and phrases."
- Media monitoring
    - "Analyze local media"
    - "listen to radio and watch news to gather intel, LLSO"
- Day-to-day tasks
    - "order food"
    - "day to day life ie calling landlord, electrician, cable, returning appliances to stores, buying appliances, reading and translating contracts"
- Information gathering
    - "SIGINT"
    - "Translate info taken from a target."
- Other
    - "Help to explain medical care"
    - "Discuss Military Sensitive Training Requirements in Regards to Aviation Risk Management"

## APPENDIX H: COMPARISON OF CAT I AND CAT II/III INTERPRETERS

*Appendix H, Table 1.* Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use: SOF Operators by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type

| | | | Frequency of CAT I Interpreter Use | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **Mean** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Very often** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 93 | 3.85 | 2% | 11% | 28% | 18% | 41% |
| **AFSOC** | 7 | 3.57 | 0% | 14% | 43% | 14% | 29% |
| **MARSOC** | 12 | 3.92 | 8% | 8% | 17% | 17% | 50% |
| **USASOC** | 616 | 3.98 | 1% | 8% | 24% | 27% | 40% |
| *CA* | 119 | 3.98 | 1% | 8% | 24% | 27% | 40% |
| *MISG* | 81 | 3.78 | 0% | 15% | 23% | 31% | 31% |
| *SF* | 406 | 4.02 | 1% | 6% | 24% | 27% | 41% |
| **TSOC** | 10 | 3.70 | 0% | 20% | 20% | 30% | 30% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 40 | 4.30 | 0% | 8% | 10% | 28% | 55% |
| **Other** | 53 | 3.89 | 0% | 17% | 23% | 15% | 45% |

*Note*. Subgroups that had fewer than five respondents (e.g., WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted. Comparisons were not made between Army SOF types and other SOF organizations (e.g., MARSOC, TSOC). 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*

*Appendix H, Table 2.* Interpreter Preference by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type: SOF Operators

| | | Interpreter Preference | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **CAT I** | **CAT II/III** | **09L** | **Depends on mission** |
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 69 | 6% | 43% | 9% | 42% |
| **MARSOC** | 6 | 0% | 83% | 0% | 17% |
| **USASOC** | 492 | 16% | 40% | 8% | 37% |
| *CA* | 81 | 5% | 38% | 5% | 52% |
| *MISG* | 63 | 8% | 48% | 6% | 38% |
| *SF* | 341 | 20% | 38% | 8% | 33% |
| **TSOC** | 10 | 0% | 40% | 0% | 60% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 33 | 24% | 30% | 0% | 45% |
| **Other** | 45 | 7% | 40% | 11% | 42% |

*Note.* Subgroups with fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted.

*Appendix H, Table 3.* Interpreter Preference by USASOC Unit: SOF Operators

| | | Interpreter Preference | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | *n* | **CAT I** | **CAT II/III** | **09L** | **Depends on mission** |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 16 | 13% | 50% | 6% | 31% |
| **4th MISG** | 61 | 8% | 48% | 7% | 38% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 78 | 5% | 40% | 5% | 50% |
| **1st SFG** | 49 | 12% | 31% | 16% | 41% |
| **3rd SFG** | 55 | 35% | 25% | 2% | 38% |
| **5th SFG** | 96 | 14% | 39% | 17% | 31% |
| **7th SFG** | 64 | 33% | 42% | 0% | 25% |
| **10th SFG** | 44 | 14% | 48% | 5% | 34% |
| **20th SFG** | 12 | 17% | 42% | 0% | 42% |

*Note*. Subgroups with fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 19th SFG) were omitted.

*Appendix H, Table 4.*  Interpreter Preference by SOF Organization and Army SOF Type: SOF Leaders

| Group | n | \| | CAT I | CAT II/III | 09L | Depends on mission |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **USSOCOM HQ** | 29 | | 10% | 17% | 14% | 59% |
| **USASOC** | 204 | | 9% | 33% | 18% | 40% |
| *CA* | 16 | | 6% | 19% | 6% | 69% |
| *MISG* | 22 | | 5% | 55% | 5% | 36% |
| *SF* | 149 | | 10% | 31% | 22% | 37% |
| **TSOC** | 16 | | 0% | 31% | 19% | 50% |
| **Deployed SO unit** | 23 | | 22% | 43% | 4% | 30% |
| **Other** | 13 | | 15% | 15% | 15% | 54% |

*Note.*  Subgroups with fewer than five respondents (e.g., AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, JSOC) were omitted.

*Appendix H, Table 5.* Interpreter Preference by USASOC Unit: SOF Leaders

| | | Interpreter Preference | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group** | ***n*** | **CAT I** | **CAT II/III** | **09L** | **Depends on mission** |
| **SWCS-Staff** | 6 | 0% | 33% | 17% | 50% |
| **4th MISG** | 22 | 5% | 55% | 5% | 36% |
| **95th CA Bde** | 16 | 6% | 19% | 6% | 69% |
| **1st SFG** | 18 | 11% | 28% | 0% | 61% |
| **3rd SFG** | 26 | 23% | 19% | 4% | 54% |
| **5th SFG** | 55 | 2% | 29% | 44% | 25% |
| **7th SFG** | 16 | 19% | 50% | 0% | 31% |
| **10th SFG** | 23 | 4% | 30% | 35% | 30% |
| **19th SFG** | 5 | 20% | 80% | 0% | 0% |

*Note*. Subgroups with fewer than five respondents (e.g., USASOC HQ, CA/MISG HQ, SF Command HQ, 20th SFG) were omitted.